

The NEW O.E. MacDougal Report - See page 29

Backwoods Home magazine

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practical ideas for self-reliant living

Questions we're not
supposed to ask ... page 7

Start your garden in winter
Sell your home QUICK
A solution to violent crime
Solar-powered mobile toilet
Make pemmican and cracklin's

www.backwoodshome.com

Backwoods Home Magazine is written for people who have a desire to pursue personal independence, self sufficiency, and their dreams. It offers "how to" articles on owner-built housing, independent energy, gardening, health, self-employment, country living, and other topics related to an independent and self-reliant lifestyle.

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ABOUT THE COVER

This is yet another Jackie Clay photo. Shot from a vantage point that looks down on her homestead, it shows not only the Montana home she's now living in (it's for sale, see the classifieds in this issue), it features the garden next to the house where she uses Wallo'Waters to extend her growing season. (See her article, which leads off this issue "Use Wallo'Water and gain a month of growing season," on page 8.)



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Publisher's Note

Backwoods Home Magazine is looking for a financial partner

I'm looking for a financial partner to help me take *Backwoods Home Magazine* to the next level and bring the benefits of self-reliance to a much bigger audience. For 13 years now *BHM* has shown how powerful a magazine can be when it prints honest articles and opinions that show people how to rely on themselves and no one else. Now it's time to bring those benefits to all of America.

BHM is a financially sound business that carries no debt and maintains a large inventory of product to ensure its continued healthy financial existence. In that regard we are the model of the self-reliance virtues we have espoused. But we are not a large corporation with the resources to *really* expand the magazine in the marketplace. Expansion takes investment capital and the connections that investment capital can acquire. That means we need to establish a partnership with someone with means and who understands the power of teaching self-reliance.

If you or your company want to help *BHM* rise to the big time, and reap the rewards of helping millions of Americans stand on their own two feet, please give me a call. I am open to a variety of financial arrangements, so long as the editorial content espousing self-reliance as expressed in our first 13 years does not change.

The MacDougal Report

The ad on page 29 of this issue launches *The MacDougal Report*, a very in-depth bi-monthly look at topics vital to the survival of the American way of life. The first issue's main article, titled *Smallpox in the Hands of Terrorists*, is 50 pages long. The report will show you exactly what the smallpox threat is (it's BIG!) and what to do to protect yourself. If you're not afraid of being shocked and angered—but very well informed—on a regular basis, I think you'll find *The MacDougal Report* fascinating.

Get a nonresident Florida Concealed Weapon License good in 18 states

Most of us who are interested in self defense know that the best way to defend yourself and your family from thugs is to own and learn how to use a firearm. A concealed handgun you can carry with you offers protection when you are not at home. I have had a Concealed Handgun License in my state of Oregon for many years, and my .45 has become part of my clothing, especially since I bought a comfortable inside-the-belt holster setup from Mas Ayoob's Lethal Force Institute in New Hampshire.

However, I've always had a problem when traveling out of state because I'm not licensed in other states. Well, I've

discovered at least a partial solution. I can get a nonresident Florida Concealed Weapon or Firearm License (CWL) which is good in an additional 17 states, thanks to the reciprocal agreements Florida has made with other states. The permit is good for five years.

To start the application process for your nonresident Florida permit, write or phone the Florida Division of Licensing and request an application:

Department of State
Attn: Licensing Division
P.O. Box 6687
Tallahassee, Florida 32314-6687
Phone: (850) 488-5381 or 904-488-5381

On the Internet, log onto www.packing.org, then select Florida at the top of the website and read all about it. Or go directly to <http://licgweb.dos.state.fl.us/license/forms.html> to request your application and instructions directly.

In a nutshell, you'll get a two-page application which will require your notarized signature, a \$117 application fee, training documentation that says you've taken a course in how to shoot a gun, a fingerprint card, and a passport sized photo. It takes about 90 days to process the application.

While you're waiting on Florida, www.packing.org will direct you in how to apply for a nonresident permit in a number of other states which do not have reciprocal agreements with Florida. Without too much difficulty, you could get yourself legal to carry in about half the states. With a little more difficulty, you could get licensed in such backward outbacks as Boston, Massachusetts, where I visit every year. I'm working on that one.

If you move don't forget to give us your new address

If you move, please tell us. You can fill out the appropriate card at the post office, but it's even better if you drop us a note, or e-mail, giving us your *old address* and your *new address* and the date the new address will become effective. This ensures there will be no interruption in the issues we mail you, and it keeps us from having to pay the post office the 70¢ it charges us when they return your undeliverable magazine. — *Dave*



Dave Duffy

My view

The attack on Colin Powell prompts questions I'm not supposed to ask

What's wrong with black Americans?

Provocative question, isn't it, especially when it's being asked by a white guy like me. We white guys aren't supposed to question what blacks do, because it automatically makes us a racist. Which brings up another obvious question: How come blacks can criticize whites, calling them honkies and racists at the drop of a hat, but whites can't criticize blacks?

Let me break my first question down into some smaller, more obvious questions:

How come when Harry Belafonte recently called Secretary of State Colin Powell "a house slave" for serving in the Bush administration, few blacks came to Powell's defense? Is it because they resented Powell's heroic climb from the slums of New York to chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, then to the inner circle of the White House, without asking for any special treatment along the way?

How about when Congress was interrogating Clarence Thomas some years back during his confirmation hearings for the Supreme Court. When a lone woman accused Thomas of sexual impropriety, black leaders joined in the attack with a fury. But later, when Clinton was accused of the same thing and worse, by many women with many corroborating witnesses, blacks came to Clinton's defense? When Thomas was exonerated and confirmed, his accuser, Anita Hill, went on the speaking circuit for years attacking Justice Thomas, but few blacks criticized her. Clinton was impeached over his improprieties, but just the other day he became the first white man to be inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame as an honorary member.

What gives? Is it because Clarence Thomas was another black heroic figure who broke ranks and rose to the pinnacles of the justice system by his own determination and hard work, and Clinton has always been the white crusader wanting ever more free federal dollars for downtrodden blacks?

How about the O.J. Simpson affair? Simpson brutally murdered two innocent people. DNA tests proved it, and overwhelming evidence proved it. Yet a mainly black jury voted him "not guilty," and we all witnessed the TV scenes of crowds of blacks cheering wildly when the verdict was announced. Did they cheer because Simpson had killed two whites and got away with it? Sure looked like it!

Why did 85% of black congress people vote against America going to war with Iraq 10 years ago, and why do Congressional blacks now hold rallies against us going to war with Iraq again? They claim it's because blacks represent a larger percentage of the armed forces so it is they

who will be asked to die. But I think that's just cover for the real reason, namely that they think America is the villain in this showdown. They empathize with Iraq as the underdog, just as they perceive themselves as the underdog in America. It's America they hate, not Iraq.

And here's a really racist question: Why haven't blacks assimilated completely into American society, even after the federal government has spent more than \$700 billion dollars on the poor—largely on poor blacks—since former President Lyndon Johnson vastly expanded welfare with his War on Poverty nearly 40 years ago? Irish people like me have assimilated, and my immigrant ancestors were valued below slaves when they arrived on the boats in places like New York and New Orleans at the height of their great flight from Irish hunger a century ago. And millions of Mexicans are assimilating right before our eyes. Is it really because racism continues to keep blacks down, or is it their own fault, a fault that mainly has to do with their desire—or lack of it—to stand on their own two feet?

These are all terrible questions for a white man to ask, I know. I must indeed be a racist to bring these things up.

But I can't help it. When I watch Colin Powell, one of the greatest Americans of my lifetime, being viciously attacked by activists like Belafonte, with people like Jesse Jackson and Spike Lee joining in, I feel like screaming: What are you fools doing?

Powell is a black man who has lived the American Dream. He didn't do it with the federal handouts that have done nothing for blacks but make them a permanent underclass in America. He did it by himself. Why aren't you rising in outrage against Belafonte and the rest of the attackers. Isn't this what the War on Poverty was all about, to make sure poor people, especially poor black people, could take part in the American Dream?

Of course we all, in our bitter, racist, heart of hearts, know the answer to all my questions. Black heroes like Colin Powell and Clarence Thomas believe in the wrong ideology. They believe in self-reliance. They are renegades from a liberal ideology that says blacks can't take care of themselves. Rather than criticize those blacks who have made themselves a success, blacks should feel ashamed that they, as a race, have wandered in the wilderness from one type of slavery only to find another: the new nanny state of black slavery, with Jesse Jackson and a host of white bureaucrats directing how all the welfare freebies are to be divied up. But step out of line, as Powell and Thomas did, and they'll be after your ass with a vengeance, accusing you of every crime in the book and calling you the white man's house slave. That's about as ironic as it gets!

My Irish immigrant mother has some advice for black Americans: She gave it to me in the 1950s when I was a boy in all Irish South Boston. I had been boasting about how great it was to be Irish. She told me curtly: "You are not Irish, you are American. Act like it!" — *Dave Duffy*



If I had to choose one season extender over all the rest, it would be Wallo' Water, hands down. And I have absolutely nothing to gain from this "endorsement," not even free products. While all plant protectors, such as hot caps, cut off plastic milk jugs, cloches or floating row covers, offer both some degree of freeze and/or frost protection, only the Wallo' Water offers radical freeze protection. I've had tomatoes planted in Wallo' Water when the temperature suddenly plummeted to 19 degrees with over a foot of snow blowing in. The temperatures remained below freezing for two days and nights. I didn't even look in at my plants. I was sure they were history.

Then on the third day, I brushed the snow off the row of tomatoes and grimaced as I peered into the first little plastic tipi. The tomato had not only survived, but had actually grown and was happy. I was sold.

What the heck is a Wallo' Water, anyway? It's a series of approximately 1½ by 18-inch flexible plastic tubes, fastened together forming a circle. This circle is just a little larger

in diameter than a five-gallon white plastic bucket. You'd be surprised that all those tubes hold several gallons.

And it is this large amount of water, coupled with solar gain, that provides the protection for that baby plant, nestled comfortably in the soil beneath its protective "wings." The water heats up, which in turn heats the soil and the plant. Even with con-

stant temperatures below freezing, the water and soil provide enough warmth to protect the plant for many hours. (Wallo' Water doesn't need direct sunlight to work, they'll work even on cloudy days, so don't wait for sunny days to set them out.)

After springtime temperatures climb dependably above freezing, those same neat little plastic tipis act as a miniature greenhouse, encouraging the plant to really get busy and grow.

So what does all this mean to the serious gardener? It means that you can gain over a full month of great growing season. To those of us with northern gardens, or gardens in higher elevations in other areas, it is nearly a Godsend. When we lived in northern Minnesota, we were lucky to have a 90-day frost-free period, and some of those were pretty darned chilly at that. I couldn't set unprotected tomato and pepper plants out before June 16th for fear of that sure-to-come late killing frost. But with Wallo' Water, I could put them out May 16th or earlier, and have plants growing out of the plastic tipis by the end of June. I credit Wallo' Water



Our Montana mountain homestead enjoys plenty of tomatoes and peppers with help from Wallo' Water.

with giving me a highly productive garden, even when the climate attempted to dictate otherwise.

Setting plants out

Till your soil and work in plenty of good rotted compost. Lightly rake the row. Mark off your row after you decide how far apart your plants should be and carefully rake a two-foot square pretty flat. This is especially important if you, like me, have a hillside garden. You want your little tipi village to sit level, or the first good wind will blow them downhill.

Pick out any sharp rocks or roots. Wallo'Waters are made of plastic and will puncture.

I usually wait until the spring weather has settled quite well before I plant my plants. (But the manufacturer has said to set the Wallo'Waters out even earlier than I do while the temperatures are still freezing, as the Wallo'Waters actually warm the soil and allow you to plant that much earlier. In a few days the soil is warm enough to plant and sprout your seedlings, even though the surrounding landscape is still frozen.)

To plant, I dig out a nice hole and set my plant in, firming the soil nicely around it. Then sit an upside down four or five-gallon plastic bucket over the transplant, centering it over the plant. I slip the Wallo'Water sleeve over the bucket. I line up the seams of the sleeve with the places the bail attaches to the bucket. It's easier to lift the bucket off later on. With a garden hose or watering can, fill the tubes. A helper at this point is really handy. If one person opens the tubes, it's easy to insert the hose (without sprinkler nozzle) and fill the tube. It's harder to open the tubes and run the hose by yourself.

Fill all of the tubes, nearly to the top. You won't gain anything by filling them all the way full, as some water will spill when you pull the bucket out. With two hands, reach into the Wallo'Water and grasp the

sides of the bucket and gently haul it straight up and out. As you pull the bucket, the tops of the cylinder will collapse against each other, making a tipi instead of a cylinder. This provides even more plant protection.

I use both overhead sprinklers and drip irrigation in my gardens. I use the sprinklers when the plants are young and small. This allows me to thoroughly weed around each plant so the rows are weed-free when we put the drip system into place. If you want to use your drip system from the start, simply lay it out on your row after it has been tilled and raked. Then when you plant your transplant, simply take a finger and dig a shallow trench on both sides of the Wallo'Water to keep the bottom flat on the ground, despite the drip pipe.

Care of Wallo'Water

The old Wallo'Water were clear plastic. Most of mine are. The only drawback to these is that they sometimes grow a nice crop of algae in the tubes along with the garden plants. This is easily controlled by adding a few drops of chlorine bleach to each full tube.

The new Wallo'Water are light green, which still allow light transmission. The color change was done primarily for eye appeal



Wallo'Waters being set out a full five weeks before the last spring frost

As I've said, the Wallo'Water will puncture fairly easily. All plastic does. Sharp rocks, roots, rototillers, rakes, and hoes all take their toll. Eventually you will have a leaking tube. You need to fix it as soon as you discover it. If you don't, the strength of the tipi will be breached and the first thing you know, it will simply collapse. I never have had a collapsed Wallo'Water hurt a plant, though.

Each Wallo'Water package contains three units. You can also buy a repair kit which contains several "repair tubes." These are simply single sleeves. By slipping a yardstick in the repair tube, you can easily slip it down inside the leaking tube and you are instantly ready to refill. Pretty darned slick, I'd say.

I now have over 52 Wallo'Water—and wish I had more. Most of them are over 10-years-old. As my gardens are often in wild areas, with plenty of rocks and roots, it's only reasonable that I come up with leaks once in a while. So I've taken the repair



Day one: It's 19° F and snowing in May. Will the tender plants survive?

sequence one more step to self-reliance. When one Wall springs more than two leaks, I mark it, while full, with a permanent marker. X is for good cells and 0 for leakers. Then I drain the Wall. With a pair of scissors, I carefully cut along both sides of all of the X cells I can salvage. Lots of my "repair cells" are fashioned from a "throwaway." I've even used plastic freezer bags in a pinch.

You have to keep the cells full of water. If one or more tubes gets too low, there's a good chance that a strong wind will collapse the whole thing as it's not fully supported. And sometimes, even without a wind, such a tipi will simply go "whoosh" and collapse. By simply going down the row once a week with a hose, you can add water here and there as needed, keeping them all quite full.

After the plant has grown up through the top of the tipi, we carefully squeeze the Wallo'Water, dumping off about half of the water. We

then grasp the tops of each side, and the whole thing is gently lifted upward off the plant. By laying the Wallo'Water on its side, the water can be emptied. I let the plastic dry in the sun and if I don't reuse it on another crop right away, I fold it, along with all the others, and store them in a large cardboard box until next season. Don't leave them on the plant for the whole growing season or take them off and leave them in the garden. You'll never get it untangled from the plant once it reaches full growth and the sun will eventually weaken the plastic, shortening its life. So use them when you need to, then put them away. They'll last for years.

By the way, the manufacturer says he leaves his Walls on his plants through the entire growing season, right up to Thanksgiving.

Other uses for Wallo'Water

Besides using Wallo'Waters to start tomato and pepper plants, I usually use several to jump start watermelon, muskmelon and other "long-season" seedlings. Instead of starting these seeds indoors and then transplanting them, which really slows down their growth, I set out full Wallo'Water on each prepared hill or basin I plan on planting. This raises the soil temperatures quickly, and weeks before it would reach melon-friendly temperatures on its own.

Then, after the Wallo'Waters are in place for a few sunny days and moderate nights early in the season, I plant five seeds in each tipi, as far apart as reasonably possible. These are then watered well with hot water. The seeds sprout very quickly and grow even faster. I thin out the hill/basin to three of the most vigorous seedlings and water with weak manure tea. You wouldn't believe how fast they grow. No set-back, whatsoever. I keep them in the Wallo'Waters until they are starting to bush out and vine. By then, the

weather is dependably warm and all danger of frost is long gone.

You can use similar strategy for a lot of different seeds: okra in northern climates, cucumbers, tender flowers, and even hills of extra early sweet corn.

I often recycle the same Wallo'Waters, first starting my tomato plants and a few peppers, then moving them to melons, cukes, and geraniums to get them growing *fast*.

You'll see them on my front porch in the early spring. And then in the fall, protecting my geraniums and begonias from sneaky frosts. I even use Wallo'Water around some of my smaller pepper plants, which I dig up before cold weather to plant in two-gallon pots for winter. With the Wallo'Water around the plants in the pots, they continue to grow happily, scarcely realizing they have been transplanted. And, of course, the fall frosts never bother them at all, even when frosts turn to freezes, which blacken the rest of the tender garden



The same tomato plants a month and a half later



Can you grow tomatoes on a Montana mountain? Sure you can!

vegetables. Then, into the house they go to produce all winter.

The manufacturer suggests that Wallo'Water can be used to protect tomato plants in the fall, but I don't think this is much of an idea, unless you are growing very small patio type tomatoes. My average determinate (non-vining) tomato plant is four feet tall, and spreads out to about two feet in diameter. The average indeterminate (vining) tomatoes, even staked, go five feet tall and drape down stakes over about four feet in diame-

ter. Needless to say, these tomato plants would not receive much protection from an 18-inch high Wallo'Water. Oh, well, nothing is perfect.

But after using these plastic tipis for years and years, I can truly say they add at least four weeks of aggressive growing season to our northern short-season garden. This, in itself, is a major miracle.

Now Wallo'Waters are not cheap, averaging about \$9 to \$9.50 for three, though you may find them even cheaper at some of the large discount stores. And they are cheaper, yet, in bulk. But considering just how much *growing* I get from them, and how long they last, I consider them a bargain.

Not quite convinced yet? Let me tell you about a "trial" I ran inadvertently this past spring. I have 52 Wallo'Waters, and I had 100 tomato plants and 26 peppers of different varieties. I planted what I needed in the Walls. The rest I simply planted "normally" when the weather was suitable. They were in the same gardens, fertilized the same, were the same varieties, and were watered and cared for exactly the same.

The plants started in the Wallo'Waters were exactly twice as big, twice as stocky, and more than twice as productive. Made a big believer out of some of my friends, for sure.

Why don't you pick up a pack, or a dozen packs, and give this nifty product a trial in your garden. No gim-

mick here—just plain common sense. They'll boost your tomato and other vegetable harvest so you'll have lots to eat and put up come fall. You'd think I was getting paid to say this. But I'm not; I'm just a true believer.

Wallo'Water is available through many garden supply houses, local farm and garden stores, and seed catalogs. Δ

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A packing crate mini-barn

By Edward King

Need an extra storage building for all those things that are too good to throw away, but not good enough to keep in the house? Need a place to keep your lumber out of the weather, stacked neat and dry? If you're like me, you can probably use more storage space all the time, but you don't have the money to invest in a metal barn or one of those wooden prefabs.

The problems of need and cost could be answered through the use of some free lumber in the form of packing crates available from many businesses.

I guess I've always been what you'd call a pack rat of sorts. Whenever I drive by a pile of trash that has useable material such as boards, plywood, sheet metal, or pipe, a little voice in me says, "Pick it up." And I usually do. So, it was only natural when I drove by a dealer for motorcycles and ATVs and read the sign that

said "Free Wood," that I had to take advantage of the situation.

After hauling away and disassembling a dozen or so 3 by 8-foot packing crate bases made of 2x4s, I began to amass a considerable amount of lumber that needed a proper cover. As I had already hauled away 23 of the smaller packing crate bases made of 2x4s and 1x3s, measuring 4 by 6 feet, I decided it was time to put them to some good use and provide a shelter for the 2x4 lumber. I had already attempted to separate the lumber from the smaller crate bases without much success. Since the bases are stapled together, removing the boards often results in destroying the base. What few boards you are able to salvage are too cracked to be of use.

I decided that whatever I used these small bases for, they would have to be kept intact. Since they were already about 4 feet wide and 6 feet long, I combined them with some cedar logs I found locally on my 32-acre plot of heaven, two 2x4s, and seven 2 by 10



The roof joists were fitted into notches atop the cedar posts.

corrugated steel panels to produce a wood shed for under \$100.

The shed ended up 12 feet wide and 8 feet deep. I used four cedar poles, two 9 feet long and two 8 feet long. The longer ones went in the front. With 2 feet of them sunk in the ground they gave me a 7 foot height. The shorter ones went in the back and with their 2 feet sinking they gave me a 6 foot height.

The roof was made of seven 2 by 10-foot corrugated economy steel sheets. For the cross support, I used two 2 x 4 x 14-foot beams.

Not only did these 4 by 6-foot sections make great wall frames but I took two more of them to make support for the lumber I was to store in the shed. Using old lumber and scrap sheet metal, I covered much of the walls against blowing rain and covered the forward portion of the floor.

Since I finished my shed several months ago, I've yet to have any problem with wet lumber. In the future I plan to build a bigger out-house and a photographic darkroom using these 4 by 6-foot crate bases. Δ



The crate bottoms make great wall sections. The 1 x 3-inch boards will support an outer skin, while the 2 x 4s comprise the wall frame.

Harvesting the wild: acorns

By Jackie Clay

When I was just a little girl, I used to collect acorns by the boxfull as they fell in the fall. I didn't know why. They just felt nice in the hand and somehow a big bunch of them felt satisfying. Could that be because somewhere in my ancestors' time, acorns were a very important food? Native Americans all across oak-growing North and South America harvested acorns, which were nearly as important a food as corn or beans. Such tribes as the Cherokee, Apache, Pima, and Ojibwa routinely harvested and used the acorn. These Indian gatherers taught early settlers how to harvest and use acorns in their cooking, as they did corn and other traditional foods. Even today, many Indians gather acorns, both to use themselves and to sell in Mexican markets.

And those bright, shining round acorns are very good for you, besides tasting great.

Health benefits of acorns

Acorns have been tested and found to be possibly the best food for effectively controlling blood sugar levels. They have a low sugar content, but leave a sweetish aftertaste, making them very good in stews, as well as in breads of all types.

They are rich in complex carbohydrates, minerals, and vitamins while they are lower in fat than most other nuts. They are also a good source of fiber.

An additional benefit from eating acorns is in the gathering. Acorns,



Ground, leached acorn meal, ready to dry. The bitterness is gone.

although they “fall from trees,” must be picked and processed before eating, which requires a walk, then bending and picking up. All of these are good exercise. In fact, that is why many “primitive” foods are so healthy. They require exercise just to put them on the table, not just a short trip to the convenience store or fast food joint.

But acorns taste bitter!

One of the first things I learned as a little girl harvesting acorns was that they tasted awful. Unfortunately, many acorns do taste bitter. This is because they contain tannin, a bitter substance in oaks which is used to tan leather. Real pucker power here. Some varieties of acorns contain more tannin than others. They range from the Emory oak of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, which is so mild it can be used without processing, to some black oaks with very bitter acorns, requiring lengthy processing to render edible.

Generally, the best acorns to harvest are those of the white oaks, such as the swamp oak, Oregon white oak, and burr oak, as they contain less bitter tannin. Luckily, nearly all acorns can be made usable with natural processing which renders them nutty and sweet.

From the mighty oak

Acorns are one grain that literally grows on trees. Even a small oak tree can produce a bushel or more of tasty, nutritious acorns. And that granddaddy oak out in the pasture could produce nearly a thousand pounds. Now that is a lot of eating from a small area.

There are now several varieties of grafted oak trees, which bear nearly double the harvest of wild trees. These trees are available for purchase from specialty nursery companies.

Not only are acorns great food for us, but for many birds and animals as well. Any deer hunter can tell you that one of the best spots to ambush a wily buck is on a trail to a big oak tree. Deer and wild turkeys harvest these nutritious acorns to fatten up for winter.

Early settlers must have noticed this, as they soon began to turn their hogs out into the oak woods to fatten on the bounty of acorns. I accidentally had this happen to two of my own pigs. I had a litter of weaner pigs, six in number in an outside pen. While we were in town, a stray dog came by and had great fun, chasing the little porkers around the pen. None were injured, but two of them vaulted the pen wall next to the shed and took off for the woods as fast as their little legs would run.



Nice fat, ripe acorns, ready to be used for acorn meal or flour



My son, Bill Spaulding's hunting "shack" sits right in the middle of white oaks, which produce "grain from trees," as some Indian tribes refer to acorns, and also lure big deer, which come to feed on sweet, fat acorns.

We hunted, called, and scoured the woods for days. Weeks. No piggies. By then, we figured a black bear, which were numerous in our woods, had a midnight snack of pork on the hoof.

Then one November, I was riding my horse down one of the wooded trails through huge old oaks, when I noticed turned-up fresh soil. Bear? Nope, my “bear” had left pig tracks. I tied my horse and scouted further, discovering seemingly acres of ground dug up underneath those bounteous oak trees. My lost piggies were found. But those tracks looked pretty big.

To make a long story short, we corralled those errant porkers and hauled them home. On putting them in the pen next to their brothers and sisters, we were shocked. Out in the woods, they really looked big, but now they looked huge. They were a third again as big. On butchering, the woods raised hogs weighed 290 pounds, while the grain fed hogs barely made

200 dressed. So much for “modern feeding.” Of course the pigs had access to roots, grasses, insects, and more. But I credit much of their hearty size to those fat acorns they were gorging themselves upon.

As acorns hold a long time under the tree, the hogs were feasting on last year’s crop all summer, then the fresh crop come fall. Not a bad natural feed.

Harvesting

First of all, you’ll have to check out your local oaks during the spring when the leaves and underbrush are not as dense. Get a little pocket tree book and try to identify the oaks you find. In many areas, there are several varieties of oaks available to the acorn harvester. Some are quite mild and sweet and others pretty darned bitter. If you have a choice, try to find a variety with mild meat and only a little initial tang of tannin.

You may have to simply nibble and check, come fall. Different varieties of oak have different shaped acorns. Crack a nice fat acorn with no worm hole. Examine the meat. It should be yellowish, not black and dusty (insects). Now, simply nibble and chew up a part of the nut. If it is very bitter, spit it out and try another kind of acorn. When you find a grove of relatively mild acorns, note this for next year and harvest away.

As the understory is usually very thin below a decent sized oak tree, the acorns are quite easy to pick up. Depending on the variety of oak, your acorns will drop between late September and October, more or less, depending on your climate zone. The best way I’ve found to pick up acorns is to simply pick a nice dry, sunny day as soon as the acorns begin to drop and take baskets and sacks to the woods and sit down and pick them up. If you wait too long, the handy dandy squirrels and other wild critters will beat you to them, leaving only the worm-riddled hulls behind.

Processing

The term “processing” brings to mind machines and chemical additives. With acorns, processing simply means making them ready to eat.

When I get home with my bounteous haul, I spread them out a layer thick on an old sheet which I have laid on a roof, corner of the yard, or some other out-of-the-way dry, sunny place. This lets them sun dry and prevents any possible molding before I get them shelled. It will also kill any insect eggs or larvae, which might be inside. If you cannot lay the acorns out in the sun, spread them in a single layer on cookie sheets in a very slow oven for an hour.

Some acorns, such as those of the Emory oak, require no more processing than cracking them open and eating them. Like most nuts, acorns of all types benefit from toasting on a

cookie sheet in an oven at 175° F. Stir to prevent scorching.

However, most acorns do contain enough tannin to make leaching this bitter substance out necessary. To do this, simply sit down and crack a big bowlful of acorns, carefully examining each nut for black holes, which indicates a worm is inside rather than a wholesome plump yellowish-beige nut. Acorns are very easy to crack. The shell is pliable and quite thin. Pop the cap off, then simply grasp it with a pair of pliers and give a squeeze. Don’t mash the kernel. Simply crack the shell. Then peel it off and toss the kernel into a bowl.

When all are done, get out your food grinder. Put a fine knife on the grinder and run the shelled acorns through it. This makes a coarse meal. Place this in a large crock or glass bowl. Then add boiling water to cover and let stand an hour. Drain and throw away the brownish, unappetiz-



Author grinding shelled acorns in a hand grinder

ing water. Repeat. Then taste the meal. It should have a bit of a bitter tang, then taste sweet as you chew a piece. Continue leaching out the tannin as long as necessary.

When the acorn meal is mild tasting, it is ready to dry. I usually lay out a piece of old white sheet in a basket and pour the wet meal on it. Then, gathering up the edges, jelly bag style, I press and squeeze, getting out as much of the water (and tannin) as possible.

One caution—don't let wet acorn meal lie about for hours, or it will surely mold. Keep at the leaching process.

Spread the damp meal out in a shallow layer on a cookie sheet or on sheets of your dehydrator. Then begin to dry it. In the oven, you only need the pilot light or the very lowest oven setting. As it begins to dry, take your hands and very carefully crumble any chunks which hold moisture. Slowly your meal will begin to look quite good.

When the meal is completely dry, run it through a fine setting on your grain mill. The traditional method was to use a stone (mano in the southwest) hand grinder to crush the meal on a large, flat stone (metate). It is now ready for use in your recipes. If you produced more meal than you need right now, you can store the meal in the freezer or refrigerator in an airtight bag or jar. The dry, ground meal will last a week or so, stored in an airtight jar on the shelf. But, because of the oil, the meal will begin to go rancid, as will whole wheat flour and homeground cornmeal.

You can also grind your meal in a food processor or blender a little at a time. I smile, thinking of the vast difference between grinding acorns between stones and using a food mill. What would our ancestors think?

Using acorn meal

Some Native Peoples called acorns "grain from the tree," indicating the

use they had for it as a grain in cakes, breads, and thickening for stews and soups. Today folks use "cream of this and that" soups for the same thing.

I think processed acorns taste like a cross between hazelnuts and sunflower seeds, and I often include acorn meal in my multi-grain bread recipes. Adding half a cup of acorn meal to a two-loaf bread recipe and reducing the flour, as needed, works quite well. Because the acorn meal is a natural sweetener, I only use a bit of honey to feed the yeast while softening it, relying on the acorn meal to give sweetness to the bread. No complaints yet.

As acorn meal is very dense, you will have to take care to get your bread to rise when adding it. One way to ensure this is to use hot liquid and beat in your flour, making a batter. Then cool so you can add the yeast and the rest of the ingredients. This helps release wheat gluten to let the bread rise, despite heavy ingredients. Indian bread was always very dense and heavy, as there was seldom, if ever, wheat or yeast added to the recipe. It takes wheat gluten, as well as yeast, to make bread rise properly. Indian breads were often small, thin cakes baked before the fire on large, reflecting rocks. They were not puffy, large loaves as we are accustomed to today.

While camping some time, why not tuck your food grinder into your kitchen pack and try making some old-time Indian bread out of acorn meal. It really puts you in contact with past ways in a hurry. Here is an Apache recipe for acorn cakes.

Apache acorn cakes:

1 cup acorn meal, ground fine
1 cup cornmeal
¼ cup honey
pinch of salt

Mix the ingredients with enough warm water to make a moist, not

sticky dough. Divide into 12 balls. Let rest, covered, for 10 minutes or so. With slightly moist hands, pat the balls down into thick tortilla-shaped breads. Bake on an ungreased cast iron griddle over campfire coals or on clean large rocks, propped up slightly before the coals. If using the stones, have them hot when you place the cakes on them. You'll have to lightly peel an edge to peek and see if they are done. They will be slightly brown. Turn them over and bake on the other side, if necessary.

These cakes were carried on journeys dry and eaten alone or with shredded meat. We cheat and add homemade butter, too. But then, we are spoiled.

Multi-grain bread with acorn meal:

Let's take a look at one of my mixed grain breads with acorn meal to see how it differs from the Indian cakes above.

1½ cup rolled oats
½ cup cornmeal
½ cup coarse ground, leached acorn meal
1 cup lukewarm water
2 Tbsp. dry granulated yeast
2½ cups boiling water
1 Tbsp. salt
¼ cup vegetable oil
2 eggs, beaten
About 8 cups whole wheat flour
½ cup honey
butter

Pour boiling water over oats, cornmeal, and acorn meal. Set aside. Dissolve the yeast in lukewarm water. In a large mixing bowl, beat the hot oatmeal mixture with the rest of the ingredients, except for the yeast and butter, adding the flour a cup at a time until you get a medium batter. Cool to lukewarm. Then add the yeast. Mix well and add enough flour until you have a spongy dough that is not sticky. Knead, adding flour if necessary to keep from being sticky.

Place in a greased bowl and grease the top of dough, then cover it with a moist, warm kitchen towel and set it in a warm place until it doubles in size. Punch down, knead several times, and let rise again. Shape into loaves and place in greased bread pans or on a greased cookie sheet.

This also makes great rolls, so you can use a cake pan, making golf ball sized rolls. Cover and let rise again until almost double. Preheat the oven to 350° F and bake for about 35 minutes or until the tops are golden brown. Brush with butter and cool.

You can also make this bread in camp, using smaller loaves and a reflector oven or forming ½ inch thick by 1 inch wide by 8 inch long sticks and twisting the dough around a green stick and gently baking over medium coals—never a fire.

So far, we've talked about using acorn meal as a grain. But the acorn is so much more versatile. Most Native Americans and early settlers used acorn meal as either an ingredient in mush, which is sort of a thick, mealy soup, or pounded with meat, fat, and berries, making pemmican. In a survival situation which requires lightweight, high calorie foods, pemmican would be a good choice. (But, of course, many of us really don't need the extra fat in our diets.)

Here are a couple recipes for these uses of the acorn. When I say "acorn meal," I mean ground, leached-till-mild acorn meal, not raw.

Cornmeal and acorn mush:

4 cups water 1 tsp. salt ½ cup acorn meal, ground about 1 cup cornmeal

Bring salted water to a boil and sprinkle the acorn meal into the boiling water, stirring briskly with a wire or twig whisk. Then add the cornmeal. Add just enough cornmeal to make a thick, bubbling batch in which a wood spoon will stand up

fairly well. Place the saucepan in a larger container holding two inches or more of boiling water. (Use a double boiler, if you have one.) Simmer the mush until quite thick, about 45 minutes, stirring occasionally to keep it from lumping.

Cornmeal and acorn mush is very good for breakfast on a cold morning. It can be served with sweetened milk and a dab of wild fruit jam or home-made butter. But it is also great as a main course lunch or dinner. You can also add salsa or bacon bits and grated cheese on top to get great variety. This mush is very filling and will stick to your ribs.

I often make a double batch and pour the "extra" in a greased bread pan. When cooled in the fridge overnight, it becomes quite solid and can be sliced in half inch thick slices, dipped in flour and fried in oil, first one side, then turn and fry the other. Fried acorn and cornmeal mush is one of our absolutely favorite camp (or at-home) breakfasts. Serve it with butter, salt, and thick fruit jam or maple syrup. Of course, David likes his with catsup.

You might want to try your hand at a "modern" type of pemmican. It doesn't keep on the trail for months, but it is pretty good.

Modern pemmican:

1 lb. lean stewing meat, cut quite small ½ cup dehydrated wild plums ½ cup acorn meal

Boil the lean stewing meat. When it is tender, drain and allow it to dry in a bowl. Grind all of the ingredients together in a meat grinder using a fine blade. Grind again, mixing finely, distributing the ingredients very well. Place in a covered dish and refrigerate overnight. (Or you can eat right away, but like many foods, the refrigerating allows the flavors to blend nicely.) You can serve this on any flatbread, such as a tortilla. It is best

served warm, or you can reheat it in the pan in the oven like a meatloaf.

Acorn meal can also be used in place of a good portion (or all) of the nuts in most desserts, from brownies to cookies. It does depend on the variety of acorn you have available and the taste after leaching. Some acorn meal never gets "nutty," only mild, while the meal of other acorns, such as those of the Emory oak, are so sweet that you can eat them without leaching, or with very little leaching.

You will have to experiment a bit here. But the end results are usually surprising.

Oh gee! You say oak trees don't grow where you live? Well, just because they aren't "native" doesn't mean you can't plant some. No matter where I go, I always plant a big bunch of food producing trees, shrubs, and perennial plants. And a lot of them certainly aren't native to the area. Of course, you can just plant acorns or buy seedling trees from a nursery. From an acorn or small seedling, you can usually figure you'll begin to get a decent amount of acorns in about 10 years.

Want faster results? Several nurseries are carrying grafted oak varieties, meant for food production. And at least one nursery has a very good hybrid of the burr oak that produces mild acorns requiring no leaching. You can write to St Lawrence Nurseries, 325 State Hwy. 345, Potsdam, NY 13676 or find them online at www.sln.potsdam.ny.us. They have a free catalog which includes many very hardy fruits and nuts.

Oaks don't grow where we will be moving, but you can darned betcha I'll be planting them so I can enjoy those fabulous acorns. Until then, I'll just have to drive down to my son Bill's place near Oak Lake and pick a few baskets so we can enjoy all those good acorn recipes. Δ

THE IRREVERENT JOKE PAGE

(Believing it is important for people to be able to laugh at themselves, this is a continuing feature in *Backwoods Home Magazine*. We invite readers to submit any jokes you'd like to share to *BHM*, P.O. Box 712, Gold Beach, OR 97444. There is no payment for jokes used.)

A man requested a female blonde painter to paint him in the nude.

"No," the talented blonde artist said. "I don't do that sort of thing."

"I'll increase your fee two times," he said.

"No, no thanks."

"I'll give five times as much as you normally get."

She thought about this. "Okay," she finally said, "But you have to let me at least wear my socks. I need somewhere to place my brushes."

A lawyer awakened after a serious operation only to find himself in a room with all the blinds drawn.

"Why are all the blinds closed?" he asked the doctor.

"Well," the surgeon responded, "They're fighting a huge fire across the street, and we didn't want you to wake up and think the operation had failed."

Once there was an explorer lost in the deepest part of the Amazon. After a few days, he finds himself suddenly surrounded by hundreds of blood-thirsty natives.

He looks up to the sky and says, "Oh my God, I'm screwed!!"

All of a sudden, the sky opens up, and then there is a beam of light streaming down on him, and a voice booms out, "No, you are NOT screwed. Pick up that stone at your foot, and smash it onto the skull of the chief."

So the explorer looks down, and sees the stone. He picks it up, and bashes the life out of the chief, who is standing right in front of him. And he stands on the chief, triumphant, huffing and puffing, with the bloody stone in his hand.

And the chief is down on the ground, bleeding and lifeless, with his tribesmen in shock and disbelief.

Now, the sky opens up once again, and the voice booms out... "NOW, you're screwed."

ATM INSTRUCTIONS

To enable customers to use this new facility the following procedures have been established. Please read the procedure that applies to your own circumstances and remember them when you use the machine for the first time:

MEN

- 1) Drive up to the cash machine.
- 2) Lower your car window.
- 3) Insert card into machine and enter PIN.
- 4) Enter amount of cash required and withdraw.
- 5) Retrieve card, cash, and receipt.
- 6) Raise window.
- 7) Drive off.

WOMEN

- 1) Drive up to cash machine.
- 2) Backup to align car window to machine.
- 3) Set parking break, lower the window.
- 4) Find handbag, remove all contents on to passenger seat to locate card.
- 5) Turn the radio down.
- 6) Attempt to insert card into machine.

- 7) Open car door to allow easier access to machine due to its excessive distance from the car.
- 8) Insert card.
- 9) Re-insert card right side up.
- 10) Dig through handbag to find diary with your PIN written on the inside back page.
- 11) Enter PIN.
- 12) Press cancel and re-enter correct PIN.
- 13) Enter amount of cash required.
- 14) Check make up in rear view mirror.
- 15) Retrieve cash and receipt.
- 16) Empty handbag again to locate wallet and place cash inside.
- 17) Place receipt in back of checkbook.
- 18) Re-check make-up.
- 19) Drive two feet forward.
- 20) Back up to cash machine.
- 21) Retrieve card.
- 22) Re-empty hand bag, locate card holder, and place card into the slot provided.
- 23) Give appropriate one-fingered hand signal to irate male drivers waiting behind.
- 24) Restart stalled engine and drive away.
- 25) Drive for 2 to 3 miles.
- 26) Release parking break.

How to be a good liberal

1. You have to believe the AIDS virus is spread by a lack of federal funding.

2. You have to believe that the same teacher who can't teach 4th graders how to read is somehow qualified to teach those same kids about sex.

3. You have to believe that guns in the hands of law-abiding Americans are more of a threat, than U.S. nuclear weapons technology in the hands of Chinese communists.

4. You have to believe that there was no art before Federal funding.

5. You have to believe that global temperatures are less affected by cyclical, documented changes in the earth's climate, and more affected by yuppies driving SUVs.

6. You have to believe that gender roles are artificial but being homosexual is natural.

7. You have to be against capital punishment but support abortion on demand.

8. You have to believe that businesses create oppression and governments create prosperity.

9. You have to believe that hunters don't care about nature, but loony activists who've never been outside of Seattle do.

10. You have to believe that self-esteem is more important than actually doing something to earn it.

11. You have to believe the military, not corrupt politicians, start wars.

12. You have to believe the NRA is bad, because it supports certain parts of the Constitution, while the ACLU is good because it supports certain parts of the Constitution.

13. You have to believe that taxes are too low, but ATM fees are too high.

14. You have to believe that Margaret Sanger and Gloria Steinem are more important to American history than Thomas Jefferson, General Robert E. Lee, or Thomas Edison.

15. You have to believe that standardized tests are racist, but racial quotas and set-asides aren't.

16. You have to believe Hillary Clinton is really a lady.

17. You have to believe that the only reason socialism hasn't worked anywhere it's been tried, is because the right people haven't been in charge.

18. You have to believe conservatives telling the truth belong in jail, but a liar and sex offender belongs in the White House.

19. You have to believe that homosexual parades displaying drag, transvestites, and bestiality should be constitutionally protected and manger scenes at Christmas should be illegal.

20. You have to believe that illegal Democratic Party funding by the Chinese is somehow in the best interest of the United States.

21. You have to believe that this piece is part of a vast right wing conspiracy.

Half a lawyer

Two women came before wise King Solomon, dragging between them a young man in a three-piece suit.

"This young lawyer agreed to marry my daughter," said one.

"No! He agreed to marry MY daughter," said the other.

And so they haggled before the King until he called for silence.

"Bring me my biggest sword," said Solomon, "and I shall hew the young attorney in half. Each of you shall receive a half."

"Sounds good to me," said the first lady.

But the other woman said, "Oh Sire, do not spill innocent blood. Let the other woman's daughter marry him."

The wise king did not hesitate a moment. "The attorney must marry the first lady's daughter," he proclaimed.

"But she was willing to hew him in two!" exclaimed the king's court.

"Indeed," said wise King Solomon. "That shows she is the TRUE mother-in-law."

A group of hunters, sitting around the campfire, got to talking about the worst pain they had ever experienced. One listened quietly as the others told their tales of woe. Finally, it was his turn. He said:

"Well, the second worst pain I ever experienced happened a few years ago. I was hunting then too, and I really had to go to the bathroom. I looked around and seeing no one, I went behind a tree, pulled my pants down and squatted. But I didn't realize I was right over a bear trap and, suddenly, it snapped shut on my testicles."

The other men winced and one said, "Oh, that must have hurt. But if that was the second worst pain you've ever experienced, what was the worst?"

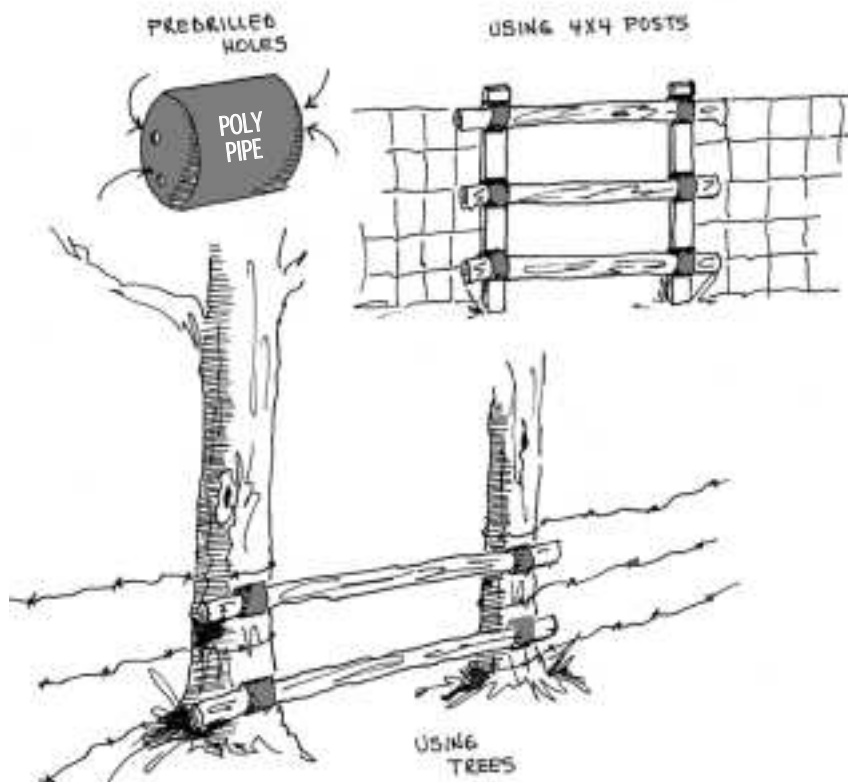
"When I hit the end of the chain."

Hingeless gate

By Clay Sawyer

Build an easy "no cost" gate using your hardwood and black polypropylene pipe. (Don't use PVC pipe as it will degrade in sunlight.) No poly pipe on hand right now? Empty coffee cans can be used temporarily.

First cut poly pipe into sections using a hacksaw, then predrill all holes as shown in the diagram. The length of the poly pipe section will depend on the tree or post used. I would suggest making them as long as possible for stability. Screws should be at least 2½" long. Once the poly pipe sections are secured, measure and cut hardwood lengths so that at least one foot overhangs on each end, the width determined by the circumference of the poly pipe used. Every two years or so the hardwood will need replacing, but the poly pipe will last indefinitely. Δ



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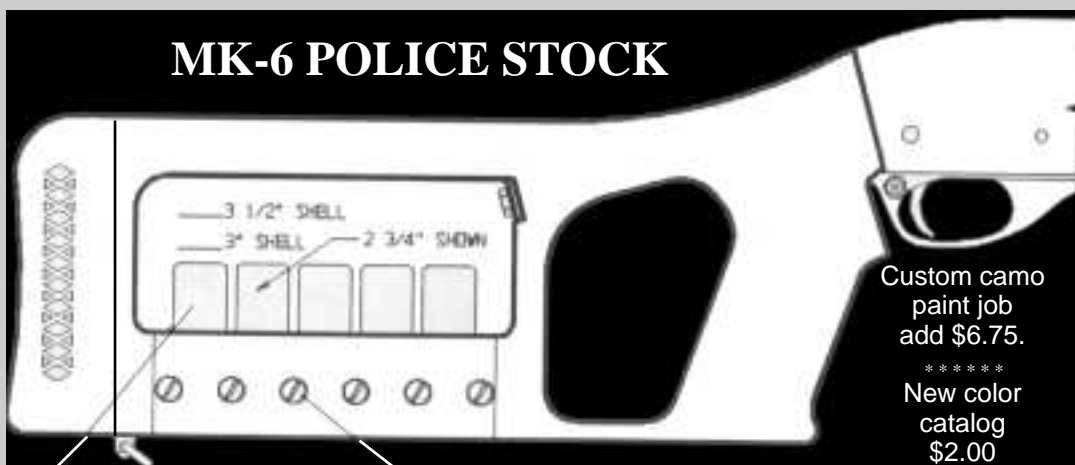
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Ayoob on Firearms:

Firearms and cold weather considerations

Many of our readers have established their abodes in places which, during the winter months, do not exactly draw the beachgoers. The older I get, the less the longest season of the year seems like “winter wonderland” and the more it seems like “frozen wasteland.” Cold weather, particularly in its extreme, changes our approach to everything from starting our vehicles to planning long hikes. With weaponry, it is no different. Some changes have to be made there, too.

Cold, bare hands are dangerous when applied to complicated machinery that requires a dextrous touch to operate properly and safely. Firearms certainly fit that category. The logical solution is to warm those hands with gloves or even mittens. Alas, those layers of unfeeling fabric will blunt your sense of touch. This pretty much brings back the same problem.

Deep cold requires thick layers of warm clothing. That reduces the body's range of mobility.

Bitter cold can quickly become so overpowering to the senses that it is all you can think about. This means that in particularly bad episodes of inclement weather, we can be distracted from the task at hand. This is dangerous when operating any sort of powerful equipment, and it is particularly dangerous when the equipment being operated is a potentially lethal weapon.

Long guns

Cold weather generally means thick layers of clothing. This can affect the way a rifle or shotgun mounts to your shoulder. Good news: the fabric of the winter garb can act as a cushion

to help dampen recoil. Bad news: the gun's butt is pushed forward away from your shoulder.

This means that the telescopic sight whose eye relief (distance from the eye) was adjusted for your vision on a nice sunny day when you were wearing light clothing is now farther forward than it should be. You may not be able to get a proper target image. When you sight in a scoped deer rifle, sight it in while wearing the same clothing you'll have on when you aim it at a deer.

Practice mounting the gun to the shoulder with your winter gear on. The added thickness of the warmer clothing may force you to push the gun a little bit out forward and away from you, then tuck it back in to get it at the right spot.

You may find that the upper rear portion of the stock's butt snags on heavy winter upper body garments. If so, there's time now for you to round off that edge.

With more clothing material between your body and the long gun's butt, it's the same as if you had put on a longer stock. You may have to cantilever your shoulders back to compensate. If you do that, your body weight is no longer leaning into the gun. That in turn is likely to accentuate the muzzle jump that occurs in recoil with a powerful long gun. If the shoulders are back, the gun muzzle is likely to jump enough to block your view, which will make it harder for you to hold the gun on target long enough to monitor the strike of the bullet.

How to fix? If cost is not an object, you can have a shorter stock fitted for winter use, and change the stock when the season changes. If for any



Massad Ayoob

reason that is not practical, go with the shorter stock for all purposes. It's easier to adapt to a shorter stock than to a longer one. This will also make the gun more suitable for smaller-statured people you have authorized to use it. Remember the rule: bigger people can adapt to smaller firearms more easily than smaller people can adapt to larger guns.

Remember that lose-lose situation of frozen fingers or gloved hands. Most rifles and shotguns have relatively short-stroke triggers. Bear in mind that an unfeeling hand—whether it has been numbed by the cold, or its sense of touch has been interfered with by gloves—is much more likely to cause a premature or unintended discharge of the gun.

The best combination of tactile sensitivity and adequate warmth will be found in gloves made of high-tech materials such as Thinsulate. You can always try the old arctic outdoorsman's trick of making a slit length-

wise in the trigger finger pocket of the gloves or mittens, through which you can extend your index finger just long enough to make the shot and then bring the digit back to its warm place if that is necessary. Downside: I found that snow tended to get into the glove through the slit.

When I toured Anchorage, Alaska, in the company of local city and state law enforcement officers, I learned their approach to “deep freeze shooting situations” insofar as gloves. Most, when they were outdoors long enough to have to worry about it, knew that in the Alaska winter the cold would be so savage that they would need substantial, serious-size gloves that could get in the way of manipulating their rifles and shotguns. They learned to fit the gloves just snugly enough to stay in place, but loosely enough that they could be flung clear, or the officer could at least raise the hand, sink his teeth into the end of the glove fingers, and jerk a bare hand clear to operate the gun.

It is always important to keep the finger completely clear of the trigger guard until such time as the decision to immediately and intentionally fire has been made. This is even more starkly necessary in cold weather, where hands numbed by cold or blocked from touch by fabric can start applying pressure to the trigger without the person holding the gun actually feeling it. I know one deer hunter who made a habit of letting his index finger stray to the trigger of his 7mm Magnum Remington Model 700 hunting rifle. One frigid late afternoon in the remote wilds of Utah, his finger rested on that trigger, and began to contract. He didn’t notice it was happening until he was jolted back to reality by the deafening roar of his hunting rifle. Fortunately, nothing but his pride was hurt. Since that accidental discharge, he has become scrupulously careful to keep his finger away from the trigger area until



John Kapson makes sure his heavy winter coat won’t alter eye relief factor with the Weaver K2.5 scope on his Winchester Model 94 .32 Special deer rifle.

Note how action lever accommodates his gloved hand.

he is certain that the time to fire has come.

There are special “hunter’s mittens” or “shooter’s mittens” designed for Arctic-level cold that have separately articulated finger pockets for the trigger finger. Whatever your handwear, it is critically important that you log some practice time with it on, handling and shooting your firearms. The gun will feel bigger when held in a gloved hand. If your firearm has a very small trigger guard, such as the old Winchester Model 1897 pump shotgun, a glove thick enough to be really warm may also be thick enough to fill the trigger guard to the point where the glove material is putting pressure against the trigger without you realizing it.

Exposed entirely to the weather, the rifle or shotgun wants to have minimal lubrication, nothing that’s likely to become gel-like in sub-freezing or even sub-zero weather and prevent the mechanism from operating. When the hands are cold, simpler guns work better. For more than a century, the lever action rifle has been popular from ice floes to frozen woods because mittened hands could easily

lever a shell into the chamber, or cock back the exposed hammer of a Winchester 94 or Marlin 336. With shotguns, the sliding thumb safety seen on makes like the Mossberg is easier to manipulate in extreme cold than a push button safety on the trigger guard as is standard on some other brands. As a young hunter in northern New England, I found the hammerless double barreled shotgun the easiest of all to manipulate.

Ammo? Nickel-plated cartridge cases, as found on premium hunting ammunition such as Winchester Fail-Safe, seem a little more friction-free and may give a small edge in operating smoothness and reliability when cold weather concerns force you to keep gun lubrication to a bare minimum. Shotgun ammo? For home defense, remember that in this sort of weather, most intruders will be heavily clad. The traditional 00 (double-aught) buckshot load will often send four or five of its nine .33 caliber pellets through and through an average-size human male who is lightly clad and takes a face-on torso shot. This dangerous over-penetration is less likely on a heavily clad man. This is

why in the winter, I always changed out my warm-weather #1 buckshot (sixteen .30 caliber pellets per shot) for 00 in my home defense 12 gauge. Some of my colleagues prefer the even deeper penetrating 000 (triple-aught) buckshot in winter, throwing eight .36 caliber pellets.

Handguns

The good news about cold weather garb is that it discreetly hides larger handguns. The bad news is that the thick, heavy padding of Arctic clothing can restrict your mobility and range of movement in terms of reaching for a location like a shoulder holster hanging beneath the opposite side armpit. You also have to worry about getting the reaching hand through the fastened clothing to the gun underneath.

Practice, practice, practice. Work out a gun carry system that will be comfortable and also accessible when dressed for bitter cold. The practice will be hot and sweaty when you do it months ahead of time, but if you ever need that handgun one cold dark night, it will pay for itself.

I have night sights on most of my carry guns now. What does that have to do with winter gun-handling? Only that in the winter there's a helluva lot more dark than in the summer, and a "shot in the dark" is proportionally more likely to be required.

Do you have a system that lets you reload quickly with cold or gloved hands? Fumbling loose cartridges out of shell loops or spill pouches will be next to hopeless under those conditions. A speedloader will be a better answer if your preferred handgun is a revolver. Once again, the heavy winter clothing will help to hide the bulkier accessories. You'll find that reloading a fresh magazine into a semiautomatic pistol will be much easier than reloading any kind of revolver in the sort of weather conditions we're talking about here.

You want a secure holster. In ice and snowdrifts, we're simply a lot more likely to take a fall in winter-time. You want the gun to stay in place. A holster with a simple thumb-release safety strap may suffice, and releasing it with the thumb is so easy that a gloved hand or a nearly frozen bare hand can manage it.

I noticed an interesting thing with Alaskan cops. The great majority carried their service handguns in high-security holsters, for just the reason cited above as well as the danger of a suspect snatching at their exposed duty weapon. However, the great majority of these officers also carry their spare magazines in open top, friction tight pouches. The reason: cold, gloved hands can retrieve the magazines faster without fumbling for a pouch flap. Besides, with the pouch generally underneath the winter coat, the magazines are protected from inclement weather and in any case, no perpetrator would try to snatch the spare ammo instead of the gun.

Gun design is a factor. Single action, frontier-style revolvers tend to have very small trigger guards. As with that old Winchester '97, the glove material can fill the trigger guard to the point where the trigger is inadvertently pressed backward, causing an unintentional firing. Double action revolvers, for the most part, don't have a lot of space between the front of the trigger guard and the frontal surface of the trigger. This won't cause an accidental discharge by itself, so long as the gun has not been cocked. However, if you have to fire more than one shot, you may find that a thickly-gloved index finger blocks the trigger's return,

converting your six-shooter to a single-shot at what could be the worst possible time. The sharp edge at the top of most double action revolver triggers can also snag on glove material as the trigger begins to return forward under spring pressure to re-set.

The 1911 style single action semi-automatic pistol, especially one with a long trigger, also leaves very little room for a gloved finger. You can once again end up with unintentional pressure being put on the trigger before you actually want to fire the shot.

With all these "gloved finger on trigger" elements, we have to keep



SIG P-220, a traditional double action .45 auto loaded with nine rounds of Federal Hydra-Shok, is an excellent choice for winter use in a gloved hand.

something in mind. We all know—or should know—that the finger should never be inserted into the trigger guard until we have determined that we are immediately going to fire the gun. However, we also know that under stress a lot of people insert their finger into the trigger guard prematurely.

Even if you have perfect trigger finger discipline, consider this scenario. You have had to fire a shot in self-defense, wounding the opponent. He drops his weapon and falls next to it; you keep your gun on him, your finger still on the trigger. The cold-numbed finger or the thick padding of the glove material now cause an unintentional second discharge. Witness



Trying to reload a revolver with loose ammunition in extreme cold weather is a daunting task; you at least want speedloaders. This is Smith & Wesson's AirLite Ti Model 342, a 5-shot .38 Special weighing less than 11 ounces.

testimony will be that you fired the second shot into a downed man who was separated from his weapon and who, at that moment, did not deserve to be shot. You may spend your next winter behind bars.

This is why what is currently called the "traditional double action" semiautomatic pistol is an excellent design for use in a gloved hand. The long, heavy double action trigger pull required for the first shot minimizes the chances of a cold-desensitized finger pulling it unintentionally. After the first shot, the gun cocks itself to single action mode for subsequent shots, so the trigger stays to the rear of the guard and does not return all the way forward. This eliminates the chance of the gloved hand blocking trigger return and preventing subsequent shots from being fired. A thumb-operated decocking lever is not hard to use even with gloves on. Beretta, Ruger, SIG, and Smith & Wesson traditional style double action autos all work well in cold weather conditions.

Another excellent semiautomatic pistol for cold weather use is the Glock. It is by far the most popular service pistol in Alaska. City police from Fairbanks to Anchorage issue it, and the Alaska State Troopers have recently adopted the .40 caliber

Glock 22. There are no decocking levers or safety catches to manipulate, and the Glock's trigger guard was intentionally made large for use by ski troops in European alpine warfare scenarios.

Handgun ammunition

Hollowpoint handgun bullets tend to plug with wool, Fiberfill, and whatnot as they pass through the heavy winter clothing of a criminal assailant. When plugged with inert matter, they usually won't expand. This fact makes larger caliber bullets popular in cold climes. The two times I had to pick a single standard-issue sidearm for Northern New England police departments we wound up with traditional double action .45 caliber semiautomatics. If the bullets were going to turn into non-expanding ball projectiles, we wanted them to turn into *big* non-expanding projectiles. That said, high-tech hollowpoint designs like the Federal Hydra-Shok, Remington Golden Saber, Speer Gold Dot, and Winchester SXT in .45 caliber are likely to open up even after passing through heavy clothing.

A semijacketed hollowpoint .357 Magnum slug weighing 125 grains and traveling at some 1400 feet per second velocity will probably open

up irrespective of heavy clothing. Ditto the soft all-lead 158 grain +P .38 Special hollowpoint known colloquially as the "FBI load." So will the fastest 9mm bullets, 115 grain hollowpoints in the 1300 foot-second velocity range. In .40 caliber, the Winchester Ranger SXT 180 grain, 155 to 165 grain hollowpoints going 1150 to 1200 feet per second, and Pro-Load Tactical (driving a 135 grain Nosler bullet at some 1300 feet per second) all seem to mushroom reliably despite thick clothing barriers.

Preparation

I learned early to practice intensive in drawing from underneath heavy outerwear. I spent lots of time manipulating rifle, shotgun, and handgun with heavy gloves on. I discovered that my favorite handgun shooting stance (the isosceles position, with both arms locked straight out forward toward the threat) often would not work with restrictive heavy coats. I learned that the isometric bent-arms Weaver stance worked better for me when so dressed.

Practice drawing and holstering, loading and reloading. Practice mounting, slinging and unslinging the rifle and/or shotgun, and don't neglect loading and unloading practice with these guns too. Make sure your gloved hand has the right interface with safety mechanisms and trigger guards when you have to bring the gun into action quickly in these weather conditions.

I find shooting to be a helluva lot less fun in cold weather. But big game season is more likely to be in chilly weather than hot weather, and violent criminal attacks upon the innocent are not restricted by season. With careful planning and lots of practice, you'll be able to adroitly handle your firearms in the coldest and nastiest weather that any frozen wasteland can throw at you. Δ

Want more fruit from less space?

ESPALIER YOUR TREES!

By Rev. J. D. Hooker

After originating in the semi-arid regions of the middle east, espaliering (is-^{pal-yer-ing}) became a commonly employed fruit tree growing method of the Greco-Roman world. Later, during the so-called "Dark Ages" after Rome's fall, these techniques were kept alive in isolated monasteries.

Once you realize just how minimal the space requirements are, and how productive the results, you'll understand why espaliered fruit trees were so common along the inner walls of castle courtyards and walled cities.

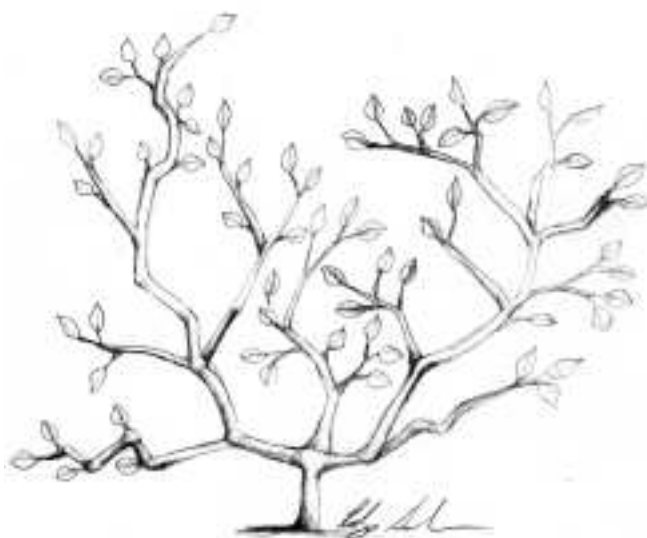
Today, these techniques remain just as popular over much of Europe, yet oddly, except among a few high grade landscapers and orchardists, these techniques are rarely used in the U.S.

Aside from regular pruning and shaping of the growing fruit trees (which you do to fruit trees anyway), the only real requirements are a minimum of six hours of daily sunlight throughout the growing season, and sufficient water. This makes south or east facing walls ideal growing locations.

Horizontal espaliering

The horizontal method involves nothing more than training the trees to do most of their growing horizontally. Normally this is done using spaced horizontal supports fashioned of wood, wire, or metal in much the

same manner as grape vines are grown. I've had equally good results using nothing more than stakes and soft string.



A simple horizontal multibranch fan that would grow flat along a wall

Beginning about 15 inches above the ground, run each horizontal support about 14 inches above the last, until you've reached a height of about 6 feet. Next, plant one-year-old fruit tree "whips" (preferably dwarf or semi-dwarf varieties) about 15 feet apart along the line of supports. Using very sharp pruners, snip off the top of each whip, right at the lowest support.

With frequent waterings it should only take a few weeks until the young trees begin vigorously branching off, right at the point where you've cut it off. Once these sprouting branches are about an inch long, select three of the most vigorous, and trim away the rest. After they reach a length of three

or four inches, select two and use strips of soft cloth to fasten them horizontally along the bottom support. The third branch is simply allowed to grow vertically until it reaches the next support, where the snipping, branching, and training process is repeated. Once the growth of the tree's main trunk has reached the top most support, use only two of the branches that sprout, training them both to grow horizontally along the top wire. After the trees have become established, prune away every branch that tries growing forward or backwards away from the supports. Each year after the fruit ripens, but before the leaves start to fall, prune off all the new branches at a point three leaf-groups away from each of the main limbs.

Keep the limbs pruned off at a point seven inches away from the main trunk.

Palmette espaliering

A second espaliering method which uses these same basic techniques ensures an equally productive, but dramatically more eye appealing, planting of fruit trees. In order to produce palmette (fan shaped) espaliers, you'll need to place your first horizontal support about 30 inches above the ground. Again, using year old whips of the desired varieties, plant one every 15 feet along the supports. Prune each one off 20 inches above the soil's surface. Allow only the two best budding branches to grow. Attach pieces of wooden lath solidly

to the supports at 45-degree angles, and use strips of cloth to attach each of these branches to one of the laths.

Later, branches are removed, pruned to length, allowed to grow, trained, and supported until each tree has filled up its allotted space. From that time on, they're simply pruned regularly using the same methods already explained for horizontally grown espaliers.

Cordon espaliering

The third technique, cordon espaliering, is also quite dramatically eye catching. My experience with this method comes from seeing the meticulously perfect work of my sister's fiancé.

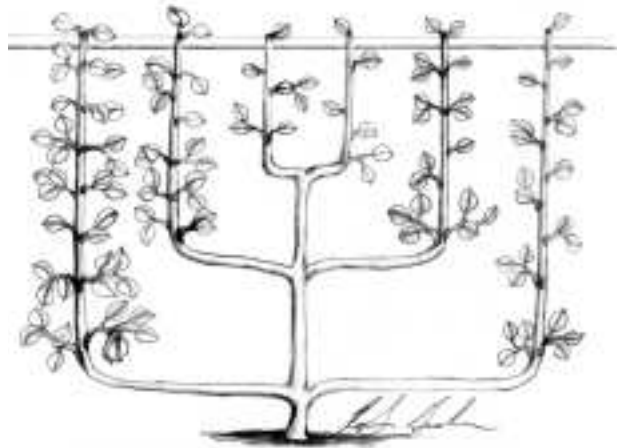
He starts with sturdy upright supports spaced 20 inches apart, and attaches horizontal strands of heavy galvanized fence wire at 2, 4, and 6-foot elevations. Next, every 30 inches he wires a sturdy 8 or 10-foot length of bamboo pole (1x3 furring strips work just as well) to these horizontal wires, leaning each pole at the same 35-degree angle. He plants a single one to three-year-old dwarf fruit tree

at the same 35-degree angle at each pole. Using cloth strips or soft jute cord, he then ties each tree loosely at several points along the angled support.

Through the entire first summer's growing season, he does no pruning whatsoever, simply using more strips of cloth to fasten the main trunks to the supports as they continue to grow. Next, all upward growing branches are pruned off at a point three leaves away from the central trunk, while downward and sideways growing branches are pruned off two leaves away from the trunk. Each year after the fruit ripens, these branches are pruned in the same manner. Once the trunks have reached the top wire, they're kept trimmed to that height.

He uses this cordon espaliering technique to form edible and picturesque living fences around smaller properties and estates. When planting small orchards he spaces rows of trees trained in the fashion either six feet apart (as done in Europe) which is perfect spacing for a hand cart, or nine feet apart, which is ideal for driving a pickup between the rows during harvesting.

Horizontal or palmette espaliers can readily be grown in rows with this same row spacing, and in fact are often grown that way in much of Europe.



Six-Armed palmette verrier espalier growing along a wall

I prefer using these growing techniques right along the house walls, or porch edges, as these plantings made 6 to 24 inches away from the walls not only guarantees an abundance of ripe fruit in close proximity to the kitchen, but during the summer's heat the deciduous leaves provide some cooling shade.

Forcing fruit trees to grow more horizontally greatly increases the number of fruiting spurs, while reducing both sucker and leaf growth. We've found that once your trees are well established, the area between the trunks provides an ideal location for plantings of low growing herbs and vegetables. Δ



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Pemmican

an ideal all-purpose food

By *Habeeb Salloum*

The first time I heard of pemmican was in the 1940s when a Native Indian friend in Regina, the capital of Canada's province of Saskatchewan, invited me for a meal. Among the dishes on which we feasted was this food par excellence of the prairie natives, which before the advent of the Europeans was their most important staff of life. It also became the mainstay of early explorers, and today it is an ideal provision for trappers and Arctic travelers. From that initial familiarization with pemmican, I developed a taste for its somewhat exotic flavor.

Perhaps my love for a similar Syrian dish, qawarma (meat cooked in fat for preservation purposes), led me to appreciate this aboriginal creation. With no refrigeration possible on the prairies during the Depression years, our family had thrived on qawarma, this ancient Middle Eastern method of preserving meat.

In later years, I often searched for pemmican but could not find it for sale. The few times I had it in the homes of friends and acquaintances only increased my yearning for this close relative of meat jerky, the South American charqui, and South African biltong. Eventually, I developed my own version of this flavored dried meat.

Pemmican, whose name is derived from the Cree pimikon (manufactured grease) was a Native Indian invention found on the menus of all prairie Indian tribes and some of their northern neighbors. It was an exceedingly valuable nourishment which sus-

tained the tribes, especially during their yearly migrations and in times of shortages. One of the first forms of highly condensed food, it was an excellent portable life-saving ration for people who were always on the move.

In Canada's north, extending to the Arctic region, the Indians and Inuit dried the meat of caribou, moose, fish, and other animals, then stored it in accessible caches for use as needed in winter. Only rarely was it made into pemmican, mostly by the Chipewyan, the forest people in the eastern part of the Canadian Territories.

In Alaska, the Inuit made a type of pemmican by mixing chewed venison with deer-suet or seal oil. Also, some Inuit allowed their meat or fish to decay slightly, then buried it in permafrost pits. Even though these forms of preservation would not be appreciated by modern man, it appears that these products were considered palatable by the Inuit. Only occasionally was fish made into pemmican, but with sturgeon oil instead of fat. And then it was mainly used as a food for children.

The pre-European peoples on the western plains usually made pemmican from the flesh of buffalo or deer, and after the white man came, from cattle. Bison meat was considered to have the finest flavor, but when buffalo and deer were not available, it was made from the flesh of antelope, bear, and any other hunted mammal available.

Making pemmican

To make pemmican, the meat was cut into very thin strips, then hung on

racks to dry in the hot sun for about two days or until it hardened. At times, the strips were attached to the inside top of a tepee to dry above a slow-burning fire. The smoke gave the meat an enhanced flavor, making it much more tasty.

The dried meat was then pounded into powder and mixed with hot melted fat. To enrich the taste and cut down on the greasiness of the fat, dried vegetables, herbs, or fruits such as cranberries, huckleberries, saskatoon, and wild cherries were added. If fresh bones were plentiful, a superior type of pemmican was made by substituting bone marrow for the fat obtained after boiling broken bones.

When the mixture cooled, it was tightly packed into rawhide bags, often with hair and pebbles mixed with the pemmican, then firmly sewn. Or the mixture was placed in various types of skin containers and sealed. At other times, the pemmican was poured into casings of animal intestines or allowed to solidify and then cut into cakes or loaves. These were then made air tight by dipping the cakes or loaves into melted wax.

The finished product, if protected from moisture, would remain edible almost indefinitely. However, in most cases it was usually consumed within four to five years. Of maximum nutritional value, it required a minimum amount of space which made it a perfect sustenance for travelers. In times of war and to supplement short winter rations, there was no better food. An ideal strength-giving unique meat preservative, it served as the main staple for the tribes in lean times and as almost the only nourishment for hunters and warriors.

It was after their arrival to this continent and their contact with the native peoples that the Europeans came to learn how to make pemmican. A perfect food for long journeys, it became a significant factor in the development of the interior communication and transportation systems of both the North West and Hudson Bay Companies. It was ideal to take on lengthy expeditions where it was inconvenient to carry large quantities of provisions.

These newcomers adopted it as their own, and in the ensuing decades many newly arrived explorers and pioneers thought of it as a white man's invention. It became very important in their daily lives. The fur trade and the many exploration expeditions, like that of Alexander Mackenzie in the Northwest Territories, would have encountered serious difficulties of survival had it not been for pemmican.

Nourishing, easy to carry, and virtually unknown to spoil, it became of great value in times of war. There was even a conflict which carried its name, "The Pemmican War," a struggle between the hunters and traders of the Northwest Fur and Hudson Bay Companies from 1812 to 1821 in the Indian controlled territory of the West.

Mostly, pemmican was eaten raw, but at times it was made into a soup called rubaboo by adding a little flour, sugar, and any available vegetable. In spite of being tasty and nourishing, like corn beef fed to soldiers, it became monotonous and new ways of serving it were often concocted.

Today, a form of pemmican is commercially manufactured, usually from beef with the addition of dried currants or raisins and a little sugar. Providing the most nourishment for the least amount of weight, it is heaven-sent for mountain climbers, Arctic travelers, hunters, surveyors, and others who journey in the wild.

This recipe is a simple modern method of making a tasty pemmican.

2 lbs. round beef steak
¾ cup hot melted margarine
1 Tbsp. brown sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. thyme
½ tsp. pepper
½ tsp. ginger
1 cup dried currants

Cut beef into very thin strips, then place in a greased pan. Dry at lowest oven heat possible until the meat turns hard.

Place in a food processor with the remaining ingredients, then process into a paste, adding more margarine if needed. Place in a plastic container with a tight lid if taking along on a journey, or store container in a cool place and serve as needed. Δ

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The vanishing outhouse

By Tom R. Kovach

A person recently wrote to a large Midwest newspaper's advice column asking for information about outdoor privies. It seems that this person's family inherited a log cabin from out of the 1930s and it came with no indoor plumbing. Instead there was an outhouse. But the problem with the outhouse was that the hole was starting to fill up. What to do? The family began talking to a lot of folks, but nobody knew anything what-so-ever when it came to outhouses. They were told that the building and care of outhouses appeared to be a "lost art."

Apparently they're right, when it comes to dealing with outhouses there is no longer any common knowledge to be shared with the new generation.

But it certainly wasn't always that way. I can personally vouch for that. I was born in 1945 and our farm didn't get indoor plumbing until after I joined the army almost 20 years later. And believe me, growing up in northern Minnesota, the old outhouse wasn't something to look forward to on a night when the temperature outside was sinking to 40 degrees below zero. Even when it is a "mild" 0 degrees, those wooden seats could get mighty frosty.

Until around the time of the Civil War, every American household had one or more pit privies. Then they began to disappear with the advent of indoor plumbing. But even as recently as the 1930s, the old familiar outhouse was the most common way to deal with human waste. During the Great Depression, the Works Progress

Administration (WPA) built two million pit privies.

There are a lot of jokes about the good old outhouses. When I was growing up kids were always trying to sneak up on someone's outhouse on Halloween night in an attempt to tip it over. I was no better than the rest. But we seldom succeeded. Most of the old farm bachelors in the neighborhood kept a close eye on their privies on Halloween day and the day before and the day after. (Some of these kids were tricky and



tried to accomplish their foul deed when the outhouse owner was unsuspecting).

I remember two brothers whose father refused to let them go out trick or treating. As revenge, they tipped over their own outhouse. Of course their father caught them and sitting down became a problem for them for the next few days.

The basic design for the outdoor toilet hasn't changed for hundreds of years. Basically it's a shack sitting over a hole in the ground. The inside has a bench with holes cut into it.

Besides being notorious in the winter for the cold drafts that chilled one's bare flesh and raised the goose bumps, outhouses in the summer were hot, smelled bad, and drew a lot of flies. In winter or summer, one did not dally long in the outhouse. Visits were as short as possible.

But some outhouses are quite comfortable and don't smell bad at all. *BHM* Publisher Dave Duffy says the outhouse he built next to his first backwoods home sat on a small hill with a beautiful view of a creek. He had put a Dutch door on it with a screen so he could leave the top half of the door open and keep out flies. A scoop of lime thrown down the hole after each use eliminated all odor. He even installed a small magazine rack on one wall, and a foam seat that didn't get cold in winter.

The crescent moon cut into the door has become a cliché signifying the outhouse. But it had a definite purpose and the moon was only half of the story. A moon or sunburst (often looking like a star) in the door provided light and ventilation, and differentiated the men's and women's privies. The moon, or luna, is an ancient symbol for women, while a sunburst stood for men. These symbols were necessary at a time when very few people knew how to read.

Pit privies aren't commonly used in my home state of Minnesota. According to Sara Christopherson of the University of Minnesota's Extension Service, "About a third of Minnesotans are using onsite sewage treatment systems, but only five percent or less of these are pit privies."

But if you're thinking about adding an indoor plumbing system to your cabin, think twice says Christopherson. Before you tear down that old outhouse, bear in mind that there is a growing movement in North America, especially in New York and Nevada, to preserve this vanishing icon. At a recent Canadian auction, an outhouse sold for \$5,600.

The friends I hunt deer with have a nice outhouse next to the hunting shack. And it serves us quite well. We've even got scenic wall-paper inside. And as far as dealing with the filling up hole, simply dig a new hole and move the outhouse over it. The old hole is covered with dirt and any plants or grass you plant there should do quite well. Great for flowers!

If you want more information on how to deal with pit privies, you can contact the Minnesota Extension Service's website at: <http://www.bae.umn.edu/septic>. Δ



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Caring for spices and herbs

By Tom R. Kovach

A lot of people use spices to enhance their meals. And it helps to keep your spices and herbs fresh. According to McCormick & Company, producers of spices, there are three ways to determine whether or not spices and herbs are fresh... sight, smell, and taste. Visually, you can check your spices and herbs to make sure that their color has not faded. Loss of color is an indication of flavor loss. A fragrant, intense aroma is characteristic of fresh spices and herbs. Crush the spices and herbs in your hand. If you don't smell the aroma, or if you taste them and the flavor is not apparent, it's time to replace them.

Spices and herbs will keep for a long time if they are stored in airtight containers, away from heat, moisture, and light. For optimum flavor, properly stored whole spices can be used within four years and ground spices within three years. The green leafy herbs will last from one to three years depending on the herb.

Members of the red pepper family (capsicums), such as paprika and chili powder, should be refrigerated to help retain color and guard against infestation. This is important espe-

General shelf-life guidelines:

Ground spices, 3 years
Whole spices, 4 years
Green leafy herbs, 1-3 years
Seeds, 4 years
Extracts, 4 years
Seasoning blends, 1-2 years

cially during the summer months and in particularly hot climates.

Spices and herbs don't spoil, but they do lose their intensity over time. Old seasonings will not flavor your food the way they are intended to. Here are some tips that will assist you in preserving the flavor and quality of your spices and herbs:

- Replace the lid on containers right after use.

- Do not sprinkle spices and herbs directly from the container over a steaming pan or kettle. Steam introduced into a spice and herb container will hasten the loss of flavor and aromas. Measure your seasonings into a bowl, then add the seasonings to the pot.

- Make sure the measuring spoon is completely dry when you dip it into the spice or herb container. Moisture introduced into the container will also result in deterioration of the contents.

Freezing does not extend the shelf life of dried spices and herbs. If spices and herbs are stored in the freezer and are constantly removed for use, condensation may form in the containers and accelerate the loss of flavor and aroma.

Spices and herbs should be stored in airtight containers away from heat, moisture, and direct sunlight. These elements advance the loss of flavor and aroma. Therefore, avoid storing your spices and herbs over the stove, dishwasher, sink, or near a window. Δ

How to BUTCHER A CHICKEN IN 20 MINUTES OR LESS...

...while leaving the carcass and feathers intact!

By Dr. Roger W. Grim, D.C.

When I was 12 years old Grandpa would let me help him pluck whole chickens after we had dipped them in scalding hot water in a washtub. That was the way he sold whole chickens to stores with his family business.

One day I asked Grandpa, "Isn't there an easier way to dress out a chicken?" He showed me a method with no need to pluck feathers and no smelly stench from a wet chicken. It's just a fast, easy way to put meat on the table.

Things you will need

1. **A sharp knife, axe, meat cleaver, or machete** for cutting off the head.



Figure 1. With a trash bag properly fitted around the chicken, clean up will be easy.

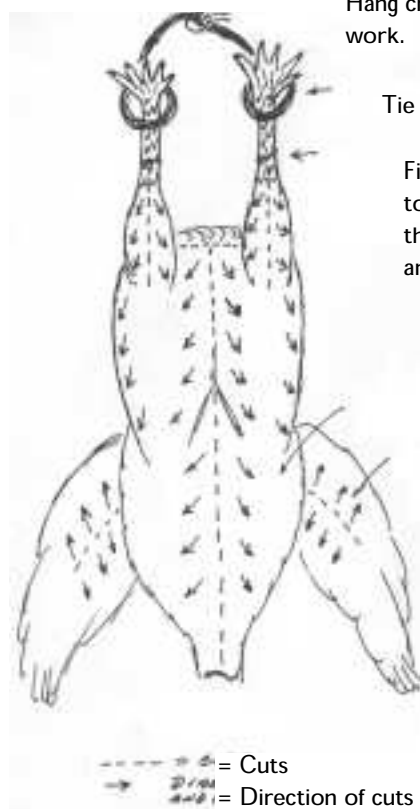


Figure 2. Front view showing where the cuts are made and how the skin is peeled away

2. **Rope.** Cut 3 or 4 pieces of ¼-inch rope 12 to 18 inches long. One is to tie the chicken's legs together tightly before you cut the head off; otherwise you will have a headless chicken running about the yard. The other is to tie the chicken's legs onto your hook on a tree or cart.
3. **A bowl.** I use a stainless steel one but any large bowl or pan will do. Put your chicken in it once you cut it away from the carcass.
4. **A large bowl of water.** Again I use a stainless steel one. It's to

Hang chicken at a comfortable height to work.

Tie rope tight around feet.

First cut around joint just enough to pull skin down and away so that the leg and thigh are free of skin and feathers.

Cut and pull breast skin away from breast and wing.

Also pull skin and feathers away from wing bone.

keep my hands and knife clean while skinning the chickens.

5. I use **two sawhorses** for a table base, over which I placed a **sheet of ¾-inch plywood** 24 x 48 inches. If you have a small folding table you could use it.
6. **A clean sheet of plastic or butcher's paper** big enough to cover your work table top. Tape it on or tuck it under the table top.
7. I use my trusty **cart**, setting it up on end. The handle bar is just the right height for me to hang the chickens from and skin. I

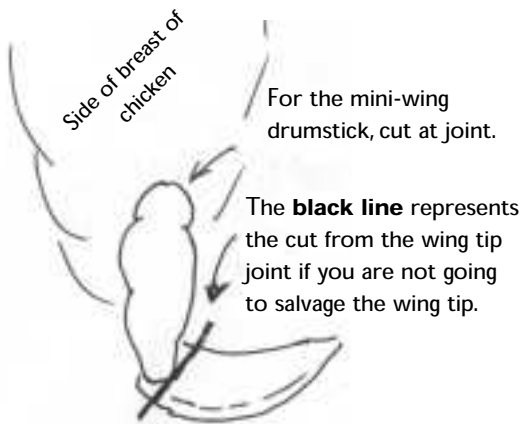


Figure 3. A view showing how to cut away the mini-wing drumstick

put a concrete block in it while I'm pulling the skin downward so the cart will not fall on me.

8. **A garden hose** is handy to clean your knives and to pre-clean the chicken of any dirt or feathers before they are taken into the house for final cleaning and freezing preparation.
9. **A large black garbage bag** with two twist ties that hold the garbage bag on the cart. Cut the garbage bag two-thirds of the way down so that anything you cut off while skinning, such as the feathers and carcass, goes into the bag (Figure 1).

The process

Now you are ready to butcher and skin the chicken.

Tie the chicken's legs together and cut off its head. Then hang the chicken up by its legs (see Figure 2) with the breast of the chicken facing you. Make the first cut around the yellow part of the leg joint only deep enough to separate the skin, but not deep enough to cut the leg tendon.

Cut and pull down the skin from the leg, cutting just deep enough that the skin will come loose from around the meat. Pull the skin of the chicken down laterally to each side, all the

time cutting away the other skin to reveal the leg meat that you will cut off later.

Continue to cut and pull the skin all the way down and backwards around the upper thigh. Continue to cut and pull the skin down around the breast and cut the wing loose at the first joint of the wing (Figure 3). Some people may want to continue to clean and cut around the feathers of the wing for the small tip of the wing bones, but for me there is so little meat it is not worth it.

It's as easy as 1, 2, 3

Now we are ready to strip the skinned carcass (Figure 4).

First, cut the wings, or mini-drumsticks, off at the joint near the breast. By forcing them backwards and cutting as close to the breast and joint as possible, you will expose the wing joint and you can cut through and around it.

Next, cut the breast out. Lay your knife at an angle, starting the cut as close to the breastbone as possible. Take your knife and stay close to the rib cage while cutting downward and backward in an arcing direction as shown in Figure 5. Repeat the process on the other breast.

You are ready to claim the legs and thighs all in one piece. If you want to separate them later you can do so. Go up to the ankle joint at about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch above the "leggin's" (that's what I call the scaly yellow part above the feet on the chicken), and cut through and around the joint so that each leggin' and foot falls free. While holding the drumstick and thigh in the left hand, take your right hand and hold the carcass while at the



Figure 4. The skinned carcass, ready for you to take the meat

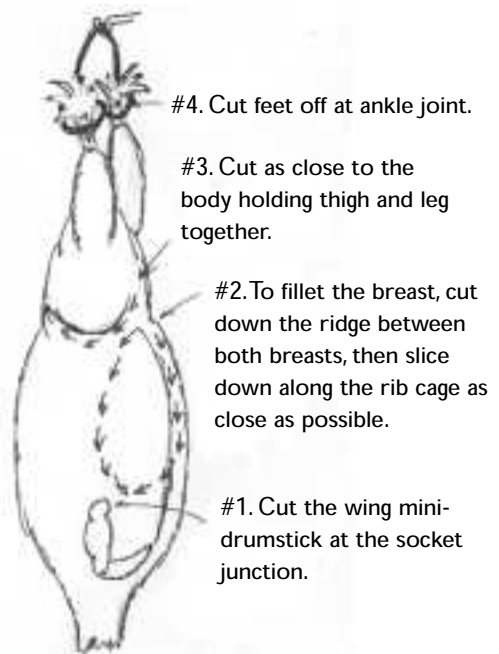


Figure 5. Side view showing where to cut the meat



Figure 6. The results of a freshly skinned and butchered chicken.

same time pushing the thigh and drumstick backwards. This is like opening a set of French doors. You will both see and hear the thigh joint pop loose from the hip joint. Cut as close to the round point as possible (Figure 5).

To separate the thigh from the carcass, make the next and final cut at the back upper part of the thigh, just about 1½ to 2 inches next to the anus. You now have a complete thigh and drumstick.

Some folks might say that you are not getting all the meat, that you are leaving the two small bony pieces on the wing tip, the two little scraps of meat on the backbone, the liver, and the neck. I say if you like those parts, go for it.

100+ years in our family

With this method, I have butchered chickens for more than 40 years, just like my grandfather did for 60 years before me. I can remember that Grandma's chicken fried in a cast

iron skillet beat Col. Sanders by a mile.

Raising your own stock, whether it be young chicks to fryer size, rabbits, goats, or beef cattle can be a family affair. Children gain knowledge, learn responsibility, and the necessary basics of self-sufficiency. Δ

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Book review: Guns Save Lives

True Stories of Americans Defending Their Lives with Firearms

I like movies with heroes: *High Noon*, *Death Wish*, *Dirty Harry* and the like where the good guy comes to the aid of guys like you and me. But I always felt uncomfortable with the idea that unless Gary Cooper or Clint Eastwood or Charles Bronson stepped forth to save us common folk, we were toast.

But that's the movies. The fact is, in real life movie heroes don't come out of the woodwork to save us when we're in dire straights. There is no cavalry. In fact, the police don't even show up, unless it's to take a report after the woman has been raped, the store owner shot, the homeowner beaten into submission or the house burgled. And if an arrest is made at all, too often the bad guy is back on the streets in a few years, a few days, or even a few hours, plying his trade once more on folks like you and me. What are we to do?

Robert A. Waters has written his second book on people who have struck back using guns and saved themselves from criminals. His books are not about the philosophy of the gun debate or about statistics, though both are mentioned.

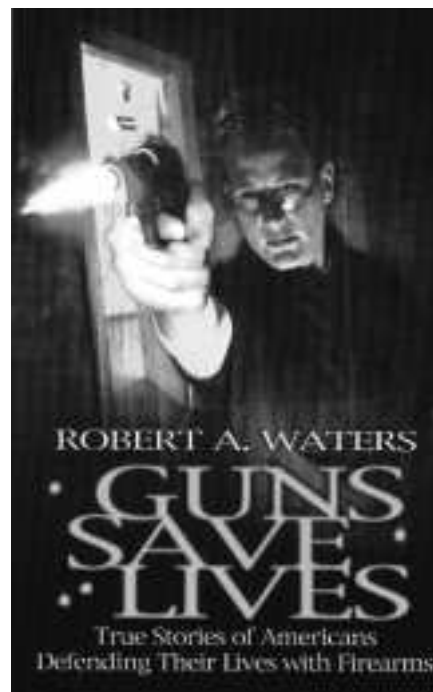
In case after case you read about real people: women who wake up in the middle of the night to find strangers on top of them while their children sleep in the next room, elderly who wind up in hand-to-hand combat with crack addicts, or store owners who find the business end of a gun jammed in their faces. And there is no John Wayne, there is no cop waiting in the wings to save them. And all would have been lost, except for the moment when the citizen—make that *average* citizen—grabs a personal firearm, and in a turning-of-the-tables that rarely happens in the movies, he or she pulls the trigger and sends the miscreant on a well-

deserved, one-way trip straight to hell. About the only time you see a cop in this book is when he shows up to take the report after the thug has been downed.

Waters points out that while a school shooting warrants national coverage, a woman who shoots and kills a serial rapist is only local news. (He aptly points out that in one school shooting, where the principal apprehended the shooter, he did so only because he, too, had a gun—a fact conveniently left out by most of the press.) He also notes that, though there are a few well-publicized shooting at schools each year, at least 700,000 times and perhaps over two million times a year, average American citizens, like *you* and like *me*, use a firearm to protect themselves, their families, friends, and sometimes complete strangers from criminal predators. At times the trigger is pulled, but more often the mere showing of a gun is enough to run the hoodlum off.

To compile his books, Waters interviewed would-be victims, read police reports, and culled newspaper accounts. Often the episodes are told in the intended victim's own words. You get to find out what goes through a woman's mind when she realizes she's being overpowered by a man she never saw before, or when a store owner has a gun pointed at him and hears the words, "This is a stickup."

If you've read the philosophical arguments, if you've read the statistics and you still are not convinced guns in the hands of American citizens really save lives, read this book a few pages at a time. Feel your adrenaline flow as women, senior citizens, and store owners fight back in bloody encounters in their bedrooms, kitchens, and stores. Sometimes, the most gratifying parts of a chapter are

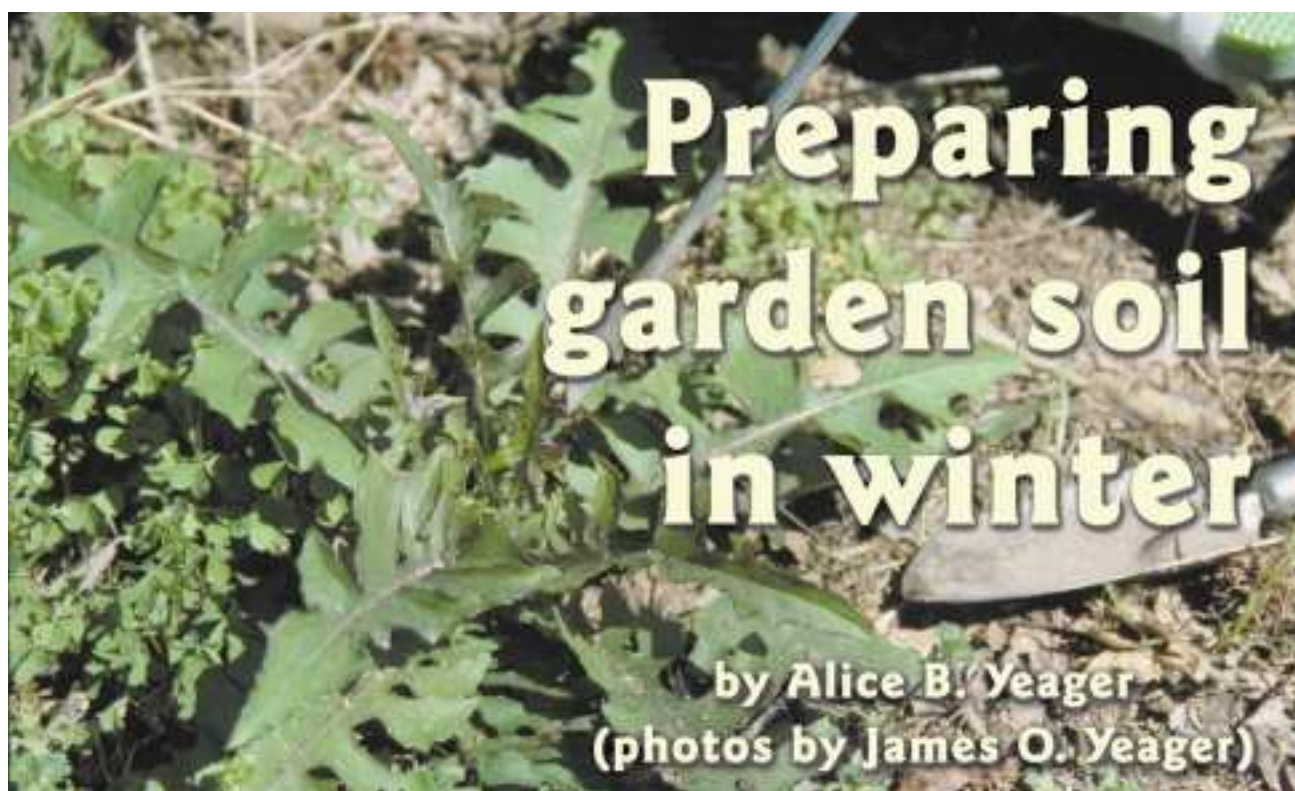


to read the words of the criminals who, having the misfortune of selecting a citizen who has chosen to fight back, sees himself as the "victim." After 28-year-old James Shugart, carrying his own gun, broke into a house with a friend and was shot by 60-year-old Ann Barry, he didn't want to talk about the bungled robbery. All he wanted to say to the police was, "That woman was just looking to shoot someone." He couldn't comprehend that *she* was the victim, *not he*.

Waters makes the case for personal gun ownership so obvious that only Sarah Brady or Bill Clinton can draw the wrong conclusions.

Starting with our next issue, *BHM* is going to serialize parts of Waters' book. But you don't have to wait for that. You can order his latest, *Guns Save Lives: True Stories of Americans Defending their Lives with Firearms* from *BHM's* bookstore. See the order form on page 88.

— John Silveira



We have to prepare for everything whether it's for a career, a city council meeting, a country fair, junior's first day at school, a well stocked pantry, or anything else. It's the same with gardening. You can't expect to reap much of a crop if you throw your seeds out on the ground with nature's wildflowers, weeds, and debris. There has to be more preparation than that.

Ancient gatherers moved about taking whatever nature provided. Those folks were dependent on the wild to see them through thick and thin. Gradually some of the ancients began to till the soil with sticks and such and they began to learn how to grow certain grains and vegetables, save seeds for the next season, and so on. They found that certain areas were good for growing food plants and others were not.

Let's fast-forward to our time and see if we're not following the same pattern when we select a gardening spot and begin to enrich and till it.

The first thing we do is to pick an area open to the sun and with a slight slope to it if possible. All vegetable gardens need sunlight—a bare minimum of six hours. Even so, lots of plants won't reach peak production, as they really require more sunlight than that. Peppers, okra, tomatoes, and other summer crops only reach their potential if given eight hours or more of sun.

We all love our shade trees, particularly in the summer when old Sol beams down and tries to wilt everything in sight. However if there are shade trees nearby the garden site, you can bet they're not only going to cast shade part of the day but they are also going to "sap the soil." Their roots are not gathered up neatly near their trunks. Instead, they are roaming underground away from the trunks seeking moisture and nourishment for the trees. Where better place to find their requirements but out there in a nice garden spot that is being organically tended and watered? This is the reason we often find long, live roots

showing up in odd places in our gardens if there are trees just beyond the garden spots.

Preparing the soil

When you have found what you believe is the best location for your garden, then the soil factor comes into play. If you luck out and select a spot where someone has diligently tilled a garden before you came, you'll probably find that the soil may need some attention, but it will be feasible to garden there again. You can go about the chore of clearing off the spot getting rid of weeds, grass, etc.

There is always the possibility, even with existing gardens, to find that the soil is too acid or too alkaline for the plants you want to raise. To be absolutely sure you have the soil pH you need, it is well to ask your county extension agent about a soil test and be guided as to how to go about this. Generally speaking, soil samples need to be taken from several spots in the garden. Brush aside any surface

debris and insert a sharp trowel into the ground for a few inches to obtain a small sample of the soil. (The agent will tell you how much is needed for a test.)

After receiving the results of the test, you will then be advised as to how to go about changing the pH of your garden soil if need be. The term “pH” is used to indicate the degree of acidity or alkalinity of the soil. pH values from 0-7 indicate acidity and 7-14 indicate alkalinity. pH 7 is regarded as neutral.

Most good garden soils will have a pH of 6.0-8.0 which will accommodate many of our vegetables—tomatoes, okra, turnips, lettuce, cabbage, asparagus, etc. There are others, however, that prefer a lower pH. Lima beans do best in a soil with pH of 5.5-6.5. Potatoes like pH 4.8-6.5 and strawberries produce better if soil has a pH of 5.0-6.0. A handy book to have is the *LaMotte Soil Handbook*. It lists many shrubs, trees, flowers and vegetables giving the soil preference for each.

To illustrate the importance of the proper pH, here is a little story about a problem some friends of ours had with their blueberries. They had planted several blueberry bushes in a



Rose bushes require maintenance. Why not grind up these clippings, put them in the compost bin and make further use of them as mulch for your garden?

very good location—good drainage, sun most of the day, etc. These folks also owned some poultry houses and disposed of the litter by distributing it on their pastures and vegetable garden. The pasture was green and the garden was flourishing. All was going well except for the blueberries. They definitely looked like they were on the way out.

“I can’t understand it. Everything else is doing so well. We have watered these plants and fertilized

them. Look at them! We don’t know what else to do for them. Could it be the soil?”

The bushes looked like they were planted at the right depth and the soil seemed moist enough. I asked what they were using for fertilizer.

“Oh, we’re using the same litter we use on everything. You know poultry fertilizer is one of the best fertilizers around. That is, if you apply it in the cool season.”

They were amazed that one of the best fertilizers around, was not good for everything. It’s poison for acid lovers like blueberries, azaleas, and many varieties of trees and berries, etc. The end result was that they had to dig up the blueberry plants, remove the soil and start all over with new plants. The new blueberries were given plenty of leaf mold and mulched with a mixture of leaves and pine needles. Last accounts I had was that they were doing fine and the owners were happy with their blueberry harvest.

Not only does the pH enter into gardening, but the quality of soil is a big plus or minus for gardeners. However all soils may be improved by the addition of organic matter such as grass clippings, pine needles, leaves,



Weeds in their young growing stage can be used in the compost pile. Don’t wait until they have produced seeds, as the seeds will come back to haunt you.

and so on. Be diligent about trying to improve your soil and one day you'll realize a good garden spot was worth all the effort. Avoid using chemicals in your garden and cater to creating a habitat for earthworms. If you have any by-products of black walnut trees (leaves, twigs, walnuts) dispose of them away from the garden as they are toxic to many plants.

We'd all like to have perfect gardening soil, but sometimes we come across obstacles, particularly if we're beginning to garden in a new place. Clay is probably the worst of the soils with which to work. A garden rarely contains pure clay, but there can be enough of it to stymie one's best efforts. A test for clay is to rub some of the wet soil between your fingers and notice the extremely fine particles that actually have a greasy feeling to the touch. When clay soil is dug or plowed, it produces big clods which, when dry, are almost as hard as bricks. When clay soil dries out on a level spot such as a yard, it produces large cracks through which any sub moisture escapes. Grassy areas are in peril during drought as the runners from the grass are actually stretched to the breaking point when the cracks enlarge.

If you want to make clay soil productive, you can begin by the addition of plenty of organic matter. Provide good drainage and work, work, work. If your problems with clay are severe, I'd suggest you find another garden spot.

Sandy loam is probably the best soil for gardening as long as there is plenty of humus and not too much sand. A nice balance is ideal for most food plants. Too much sand and it's like gardening in a sieve as water doesn't linger long in sand. You'll find yourself spending far too much time watering the garden between showers if your soil is too much on the sandy side.

After all the spring and summer effort, the time arrives when the last

possible vegetable has been gleaned from the garden. Maybe some fall greens remain, but winter is soon going to take its toll on them. Here in the Southwest Arkansas part of Zone 8, fall is a good time to take stock of your failures and successes and plan ahead for next year.

Fortunately, gardeners in our area can do quite a bit while the garden is resting. We can remove old bean vines and supports, pull up stalks of plants that were cut down by Jack Frost, and generally tidy up the place. We can almost work at this at our leisure, as our really foul weather usually occurs from mid-December through January.

We have raised beds and after removing any dead plants or debris, I like to give them a nice thick layer of organic matter to decompose during the winter. This will make a home for the earthworms that will till our soil in the spring. Nothing with a lot of seeds attached is put on the beds or in the compost bin. Seeds will only come back to haunt us in the spring. You can count on nature to keep a liberal supply of weed seeds in reserve.

Stalks of tall plants such as sunflowers, Jerusalem artichokes, and okra all make good places for certain

garden pests to harbor over until warm weather begins again. However these stalks may be crushed in a shredder along with twigs, vines, etc., and added to the compost bin where they will be of use. Shrub clippings and rose bush trimmings may be ground up and put in the compost bin where they will make mulch and be ready to apply to the garden when spring rolls around.

Some folks rake up their leaves and put them in bags for the local trash hauler to cart away. Then they buy fertilizer for their plants. What better fertilizer than the organic matter they paid the trash hauler to remove? Yard rakings can almost always be used around shrubs and trees to a good advantage. Want to cut down on the summer water bill? Try mulching.

The cold season is also a good time to check one's gardening tools with a view to sharpening some, replacing handles in others, and discarding those that are of no further use. When spring comes, you'll be glad your tools are prepared for it. If you have a greenhouse, chances are you could use the room now occupied by some things that belong in the trash bin. In our case, we are making plans to remodel our greenhouse with a view

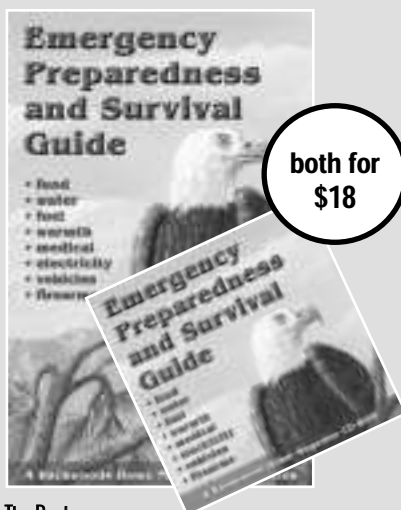


Picture perfect baskets of vegetables require some preparation. Soil pH, quality of soil, mulch...they all add up.

to cutting down on some of the work connected with handling large plants. After all, there does come a time.

The Scout motto, "Be prepared" can certainly be applied to gardening. There's no point in beginning the gardening season by having to clear the place of debris, tough perennial weeds, matted vines, and other tripping hazards. That sort of thing makes one wonder if Mama raised a fool. Gardening should be a pleasant experience wherein gardeners look forward to tending their plants and harvesting those picture perfect vegetables that make them the envy of the neighborhood. Δ

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Living with wildlife

By Tom R. Kovach

As the human population grows and spreads out to other areas, there appears to be a huge increase in human and animal confrontations. Some wildlife encounters are merely nuisance experiences. Others can be costly and dangerous.

There are reports from all over the United States concerning the increase of coyotes who have an uncanny ability to adapt to populated areas. There have been more than a few reports of coyotes attacking young children. And with mountain lions protected in just about every state, the population of these big cats has increased to the point where there have been several fatal human/mountain lion incidents.

The same holds true for bears, especially black bears which have been on the increase in a number of states. A mother black bear with her cubs nearby can be a very dangerous creature.

Wildlife officials have a number of suggestions for homeowners and others who live in areas populated by nuisance animals and also those of the more dangerous variety. Here are some ideas put forth by those who deal with wildlife on a regular basis. These tips can help keep the creatures we live with at a safe distance:

- Feeding birds and squirrels is just fine. But feeding larger animals like bears, raccoons, etc., is just asking for trouble. Feeding wildlife can make these creatures less afraid of man. And that can be dangerous.
- Bring in pet bowls in the evenings. Most wild animals really enjoy the food we put out for cats and dogs. Once they know the food is there, animals will keep coming back for more.
- Garbage is a big attraction for wildlife. They love an easy meal. Keep your garbage in cans with tight-fitting lids and keep them chained or tied down in some way. Keep outside grills clean

and pick up any food that might have fallen on the ground after outdoor meals such as picnics.

- Pick up any fallen fruit if you have fruit trees in your yard. Animals love fruit. I'm told that coyotes even have a taste for watermelons. Gardens should be fenced in whenever possible.

- Keep your pets inside at night or in a building or enclosure that offers them protection. Keep an eye on your pets during the daytime hours. Mountain lions can take down even the biggest dog.

- Deer seem to have an appetite for almost any sort of greenery, from garden goodies like cabbage and sweet corn to popular ornamental shrubs such as azaleas. Try planting some deer-resistant plants. Your local garden center might have some suggestions.

- If you're going to be gone for a long period of time, it would be a good idea to cap your chimney. Raccoons often use open, uncapped chimneys as nests. And once they're in there, they can also get into your house. And while they may look like neat, little creatures, they can be very destructive and costly in a house.

- Raccoons and skunks, often make use of areas under out-buildings, or inside of them if they have a way to get in. Try to close off crawl spaces and other little crannies where these animals can crawl in and make themselves at home. Skunks and other creatures in these places not only cause a lot of bad odor, but they can also transmit disease.

- Wildlife biologists also suggest that you make your yard as park-like as possible. Keep it free of brush and low branches that make for good hiding spots.

- And if you have neighbors close by, get their help. If even one resident in a neighborhood decides to feed deer, raccoons, or other critters, the wildlife problem will be the same for everyone. Δ

Sell your home:

get a good price and sell it faster

By Jackie Clay

Few of us backwoods folk were born rich or have made a bundle somewhere along the way. We work hard and have big dreams, but unfortunately, little cash. Home ownership can be a ladder to those dreams, but like a ladder, sometimes you have to start at the bottom.

If you buy wisely, with creative financing, and immediately begin remodeling and dressing a place up, you'll be able to increase your buying ability when your family feels ready for the next step in that dream.

Dress that place up

So many times it seems that home sellers just hang a FOR SALE sign and that's that. Bad move. How about doing a little to perk up the looks and sales possibilities?

No one should move into a new place and just let it sit. Not only is this depressing to you, the owner, but if a place is not improving in looks it will slowly decrease in value. Simple things, such as maintaining fences, building new ones, adding a barn, gardens, putting a needed addition on the kitchen, fixing the broken window in the garage, etc., do a lot.

Work on the appearance of the yard. Establish flower beds, permanent landscape plantings, add trees, a rock garden, even a pond or trickling fountain. Encourage the birds to feed and inhabit your yard. Nothing beats the beauty and fragrance of bright, cheer-

ful flowers and the soft birdsong all about.

Keep the house painted, washed, and clean. We spent \$40 on four gallons of quality house paint on sale and completely changed the feeling of our little stucco home in New Mexico. It went from a plain, white, isolated ranch house stuck out on the plains to a comfortable, soft adobe home, radiating warmth Spanish-style as soon as the neutral adobe rose-tan was rolled on. The change was amazing.

Likewise, when we pressure washed our log cabin in Montana, faded grey from time, then brushed on a comfortable glowing stain and sealer, everyone who saw it was amazed. It went from "plain-Jane" to "log-lodge" in three days.

Such dramatic changes are common, and each dramatically increases the sale value of your home.

Don't neglect the barns, shed, garage, or even outhouse. A little paint and a few days' work can pay big dividends, quickly adding thousands to the value of your property.

If your home is on a large lot or acreage, plant a vegetable garden and some fruit trees. You'd be surprised at how many other folks are interested in grow-your-own food. My garden has always been a big factor in selling a place when we were ready to move on to another step on our dream ladder.

Don't go overboard in remodeling the interior of your home, but don't let it stagnate, either. You don't have to be rich to do wonders for a "bor-



The kitchen of our New Mexico home was done in a warm "chili pepper" motif.

ing” home. Pick a theme for the rooms: apples, chickens, cows, or whatever. So far, I’ve had a “chicken” kitchen, where I simply removed cracked 1960’s plastic from the kitchen cabinet doors and put in pieces of masonite, on which I painted hens sitting on nests of eggs, covered by real chicken wire—an instant oak-framed farm picture. Cost: \$6 for the entire kitchen.

Then it was elk when we moved to the mountains above Jefferson City, Montana. I used pieces of elk antler for drawer and door pulls, hung some from a light fixture, stenciled bull elk shadows marching across lamp shades and the 1x6” finished pine border in the living room. Cost: \$4.99 for the paint.

Your home can be “Indian,” “Farm,” “Wilderness Lodge,” or “High Fashion.” Sticking to a theme will definitely make it stand out to prospective buyers in the future. You can’t just decide to sell on Monday and develop a look. It takes time.

Keep the inside painted, clean, and functional. If a sink trap leaks, fix it. Door hard to close? Take a few minutes and repair the problem.

Things to do when you are ready to sell

Make a detailed pass around your home with notebook in hand. Jot down every little bitty thing that turns you off. Then ask your friend, relative, or neighbor to do the same. And fix the problem spots.

Pick up any trash, hay strings, little bits of plastic or paper in the grass. Mow any weeds or unsightly brush around the buildings. Rake the yard and keep it mowed and watered as needed. If it is winter, make sure the walks are easily accessible and buyer-friendly.

Wash the windows inside and out. Then do the drapes, curtains, and carpets, if necessary. Don’t bother recarpeting the floors, as most buyers will change the flooring to suit their



The same house in New Mexico as it was when the Clays bought it.

tastes, anyway. The only exception would be if one is so shabby that it just plain looks tired, giving a dingy appearance to the room.

If the walls need washing or repainting, do it. Wash the light fixtures, and clean out the dead bugs.

A lot of experts recommend putting any “extra” furniture or boxed “junk” in storage. I agree. The more furniture and boxes around, the smaller and more cluttered rooms seem.

Pay special attention to the front walk, flower beds, porch, and front door of the house, as this is where the buyer will get their first impression of your home. You can make it or break it here. Paint the front door and hang a nice wreath next to it. Hang some potted plants on the porch or set some next to the steps. You only have one chance for that vital first impression, so make the most of it.



A warm, comfortable home...with a lot of work that increased its value.

When your home is at its best, take a couple of rolls of film of the house or homestead, inside and out, on a beautiful morning. When you are satisfied, get reprints of several of the best to show or send to interested buyers.

Pricing

Decide what price you need to sell your home for. Take into account a realtor's commission (if you decide to use a realtor), closing costs and any money you still owe on the home. Shop around and see what similar properties are selling for. Get a couple of estimates from realtors. You don't have to list with them. If their estimates seem to be in line with your idea, you have your price.

Don't get hung on a low estimate if you have a unique property. For instance, when we sold our farm in northern Minnesota, it was a very developed homestead (I'd been there 17 years.). There were three gardens, hay fields, pastures, an old hay/cow barn, a new horse barn, a pretty yard, a 40' log greenhouse, lots of flowers, shade trees, woods for lumber, firewood, and hunting, etc. The bank told me I'd be lucky to get \$40,000 for the 120-acre "farm." I sold it quite quickly to a happy buyer for \$67,000. (I even won a \$10 bet with the banker!)

How did I pull that off? I'm no financial whiz, but I am very attuned to self-reliant living, and what folks are looking for in this line. I may be ready to move on up my dream-ladder, but the step I was on was just right for a whole lot of other folks. I realized this, but "traditional" realtors and bankers didn't have a clue. So I "earned" an extra \$27,000 by having informed confidence.

There is a buyer for every home; it is up to you to decide just who your buyer might be and target them with your sales approach.

Even if you use a realtor (which we have done twice), you can still sug-



Bright flower beds quickly beautify a home.

gest places he or she might advertise your place. We have carried it a step further, insisting on the right to advertise ourselves, even if a property was listed with a realtor.

By the way, you certainly do not have to list a property with a realtor in order to sell it. Most attorneys will gladly handle the legal end of a real estate sale for a very reasonable fee. But if you decide to sell it yourself, be prepared for much extra work, answering phone calls, showing the property, talking to prospective buyers, etc.

Realtors have the advantage of having a listing instantly available on the internet for out-of-town buyers looking for a property in the area.

You have the advantage of intimately knowing your home, neighborhood, and locale. And with increasingly user-friendly computer programs, you can easily list your property yourself on the internet. We did our place in New Mexico, which we sold in December. It was listed through a small-town Chamber of Commerce and through *Rural*

Property Bulletin. We had good responses to both.

Regardless of whether or not you choose to use a realtor, you should aggressively advertise. This can cut the time it takes to sell a home in half or less. Target your buyer, then go after them.

Is your place a first-buyer home? A ranch? A homestead? A backwoods home? There are magazines and advertisers for every market. We advertised in *Backwoods Home Magazine*, *Countryside and Small Stock Journal*, *The Mother Earth News*, and *Rural Property Bulletin*, and sold property, through the years, from each of them.

Don't neglect your local "free shopper" paper, the Sunday paper of the nearest large city, ads on the feed store bulletin board, or wherever you think a potential buyer might access your ad.

Answering questions

The phone rings. It's the first inquiry on your property. Choke down that racing heart and make a friendly, intelligent impression. But what do you say?

It's helpful to make a short list of your property's good points: the square feet of your home, how many bedrooms, how deep the well is, and those really neat things about your home and area. Don't gush, just tell them about your property and answer any questions honestly.

If the buyer is from a ways off, and seems interested, offer to send a packet including a few photos for their convenience. Be aware that you'll probably send many such packets before an inquiry turns to a "looker," let alone a buyer. It can be a long process.

If such a person calls back with more questions, do all you can to help, including sending a larger packet with such things as maps, local Chamber of Commerce flyers, fishing



*A good garden always
boosts saleability.*

information, or whatever seems to interest the buyer.

Never lie or gloss over obvious (or not-so-obvious) detractions to your property: a dirt access road, a drive that floods, poor winter access, etc.

Showing your property

The day arrives. Your first “buyer” has made an appointment to view your home. Hopefully, you’ve had time to pick up, clean up, and mow the lawn. It doesn’t hurt to bake a batch of bread or a couple of pies just before you expect the buyer. Don’t laugh! I’ve had two buyers tell me later that those wonderful loaves of bread and that cherry pie made my home seem so nice. Neither was an on-purpose bait, but hey, it works!

If your place is listed with a realtor, most prefer that you discretely fade away and let them show the property, as most realtors feel that having the owner around makes buyers shy about asking questions.

If you are selling the home yourself, make the buyer feel welcome, and take them for the tour. Honestly answer any questions they pose. How are the neighbors? Is the well good? What can you grow in your garden? Where do the kids go to school?

Never ask, “Well, what do you think?” If they are interested, they’ll tell you. Some need to look, then go home and think about it. Let them.

But don’t quit trying to sell the property or take it “off the market” until you have it SOLD. We made that mistake recently. We had very interested out of state buyers who wanted our ranch in New Mexico. They signed a contract, and put down several thousand dollars. They were real gung-ho folks. We signed a contract on a neat remote homestead in Alaska, then began to have our animals tested for the trip through Canada. We contracted with a friend to buy his tractor and equipment and my oldest son even bought plane tickets to fly down to help us drive. We were that sure.

Then our buyers just dropped out. OUCH!

We lost the place in Alaska, due to the seller’s needed time frame, Bill lost his \$1,200 in unused plane tickets, we inconvenienced our friend with his tractor, and we had to start all over again, selling the ranch while spring turned to summer.

We should have kept in contact with the other four potential buyers who had expressed much interest in buying the place. Instead, we told them it had been sold. By the time our deal fell through, they had found other properties to buy.

Don’t really quit selling until you have cashed the check and have moved. Instead, develop a portfolio of back-up buyers; buyers who have been very interested when the contract to buy was signed. Instead of saying, “It’s sold,” say, “We think we have it sold, but we’ll be glad to give you a call if the deal falls through.” That is less permanent-sounding, and gives some hope to the second-place buyer.

And, as we found out, it is a darned good idea. Sort of like carrying a spare tire when you drive, just in case.

The legal stuff

When the happy day comes and your buyer says he’ll buy, meeting the terms you have decided on, offer to drive them to your attorney to sign a buy-sell agreement. At this time, they will probably put down earnest money (usually \$500-\$1,000), which goes into an escrow account, binding the deal until the title search, if required, has been done, guaranteeing a clear title to the buyer. At this time, the closing is done and the purchase price or down payment is paid to the seller.

Out of this amount are taken a portion (usually half) of the attorney’s or realtor’s fees, taxes due (usually prorated), any money still owed on the property, and the cost of the title insurance, if required.

There can be other miscellaneous expenses, such as home inspection for such things as termites, radon, structural problems, etc.

With a little luck (and a lot of work on your part), you’ll walk out with a check in your hand and smile on your face, knowing that you’re soon stepping up on that next rung of the dream ladder, and on to that backwoods home. Δ

Want more Clay?
www.backwoodshome.com

the gee-whiz! page

By O.E. MacDougal

Heroes of the Old West

Bat Masterson, legendary gun fighter, gambler, and friend of Wyatt Earp, was a Canadian. At the end of his life he lived in New York City where he was a respected sports writer for the New York Morning Telegraph. He died of a heart attack at his desk in the offices of the Telegraph in New York City at age 65.

Doc Holliday, another of Earp's friends and also a gun-fighter who accompanied Earp and his brothers in the gunfight at the OK Corral, was by profession a dentist. He "died with his boots on" succumbing to tuberculosis in a Denver sanitarium at age 37.

Wyatt Earp himself, a legendary lawman, was actually a lawman for only 6 of his 81 years. At various times in his life he was wanted for murder, running a confidence game, cattle rustling, and horse theft. Later in life he appeared as an extra in at least one Hollywood movie and when he died, movie legends Tom Mix and William S. Hart were among his pallbearers.

Right and left

People are not only right or left-handed, they're also right or left-footed and right or left-eyed. Being right handed doesn't necessarily mean you're right-footed or right-eyed. Such a condition is known as "crossed dominance." (I'm right-handed and right-footed, but I'm left-eyed.)

The world's highest mountain

What's the highest mountain on earth? The answer depends on what you mean by "highest."

The peak with its top furthest above sea level is Mt. Everest, at 29,035 feet. But Mt. Everest and all of the other mountains in the Himalayan range sits on land that is already well above sea level. The highest mountain from base to peak is Alaska's Mt. McKinley.

Everest isn't even the "highest" point on earth. Little known Mt. Chimborazo, an extinct volcano in Ecuador, is the highest, although it is only 20,561 feet high. The reason is that the earth is widest at the equator where Chimborazo sits. This places its peak 10,560 feet further from the center of the earth than Everest's.

But all we've been talking about here are mountains above sea level. To many, the highest mountain of all is Mauna Kea, which is the highest mountain in Hawaii. When measured from the ocean floor it is 33,476 feet high.

Things that can get you sent to hell

Until the Italian inventors, Gasparo Berti and Evangelista Torricelli, independently invented the barometer, and in doing so created the first sustained man-made vacuum, it was thought that a vacuum couldn't exist. The belief was that "nature abhors a vacuum" and the concept was so strong it became part of Catholic doctrine. In fact, the Church excommunicated anyone who defended the idea that a vacuum could exist or that one could be produced by man.

David vs Goliath

We all know the biblical story of David and Goliath. Their confrontation has become a cliché for a little guy, David, in contest with a giant, Goliath. But the fact is, David was always the favorite in that confrontation. What we don't understand about slings today is that in the hands of a trained slinger, a sling was a weapon of certain destruction.

Slings used in ancient times had nothing in common with the sling-shots young boys make today, and slingers were as accurate with their weapons as archers were with theirs. Until the development of the compound bow, slingers could hurl their missiles beyond the range of an archer. Roman slingers trained to throw their stones at a distance of 200 yards, but ranges of a quarter mile were possible and enemy troops were often in more danger from slingers than from archers.

And what they hurled were not "pebbles" but stones that ranged in size from as small as a golf ball to as large as your fist; they were thrown faster than Randy Johnson can throw a baseball and with deadly accuracy that's hard to appreciate today. The larger stones could smash skulls, break bones, penetrate the body, and even penetrate much of the armor used in ancient times. Some "stones" were even cast from dense clay and others from lead to establish uniform size and weight which ensured consistent range and accuracy.

So, on the day they met, Goliath may have been almost 10 feet tall, carried a sword, and worn armor, but the smart money was on the guy carrying the sling.

Install a mobile, solar powered toilet

By Jeffrey R. Yago, P.E., CEM

When our solar business started to really increase, I found myself spending more and more time in my truck traveling down the highway to very remote job sites. My first investment was to buy a good quality parts trailer when I outgrew the back of my truck. Unfortunately, I soon learned that when mother nature calls, I was either working on houses still under construction that did not have a working plumbing system, or on the road many miles from the next drive-thru.

Although I do not own an RV, I have watched RV owners go through their daily routine of connecting temporary drain pipes, emptying holding tanks, flushing gray water tanks, and refilling a fresh water tank just to have a working toilet. Since I am basically lazy, I knew the solution to my problem would definitely not involve installing a typical RV flush toilet in my work trailer.

After extensive research (net surfing) with my trusty laptop, I found several suppliers of toilets that did not require water connections, sewer connections, septic tanks, or holding tanks. This seemed too good to be true, but there was a catch: to eliminate any odors and increase liquid waste evaporation, most of these units include a small exhaust fan that must operate continu-

ously. In addition, during cold weather or higher use rates, most models include a small thermostatically controlled heater plate to prevent freezing of the damp mulch and to increase liquid evaporation.

So the question is, can this type of toilet operate satisfactorily without having the convenience of a grid connected 110-volt AC wall outlet? I decided that I would not need the auxiliary electric heater plate due to my limited weekly usage. If this ever became a problem, I could temporarily power the heater plate from an extension cord to the garage when parked at home. This leaves the small exhaust fan that must be powered full time. Further research found that

almost all manufacturers of self-contained remote cabin toilets have modified versions for mobile applications like boats and RVs which replace the standard 120-volt AC fan with a 12-volt DC fan.

Brief history

The first non-traditional water flush toilets were developed in Europe in the 1960s for small rural mountain cottages. These operated on the principle of incinerating the waste. Although this technology is still in use today, the high electric consumption needed for operation makes this design not very practical for solar power or mobile applications.

Today there are several manufacturers for composting toilets which are available in many different sizes, styles, and capacities. Some high capacity units are as large as refrigerators laying on their side, and they are usually installed under the bathroom floor or in a basement. Smaller versions are self-contained and include special mounting hardware for installation in RVs and boats. Some models still utilize limited water flushing toilet seats in their operation, while others do not. Several have a manual hand crank to turn the compost drum and some use an electric motor.

Installation

I decided to purchase the Sun-Mar Ecolet Mobile toilet and was very surprised



All mounting and venting hardware was included with the Sun-Mar kit.

when it was delivered. I was expecting to receive just a toilet, and like most products requiring installation, I was dreading the multiple treks to the building supply store to purchase the missing odd sized pipe fittings, special mounting hardware, and hard to find supplies. Instead, the shipping box included the toilet, all required three-inch vent piping, a one-inch pipe drain pipe, flex exhaust pipe, all mounting bolts and brackets, a large bag of mulch, and initial start-up supplies.

First I built a plywood divider wall inside the work trailer to create a small bathroom area with access from the side door. Unpacking the 50-pound toilet and mounting it in the work trailer took less than 30 minutes. It took another two hours to install the vent pipe because I had to cut a 3-inch vent hole in the metal trailer wall, which I finished with a plastic exhaust grille I found at a marine supply store. The toilet vent pipe extends up to the exhaust fan using the 3-inch PVC pipe, then it is routed at an angle to the upper side trailer wall using the various vent pipe fittings and flex duct provided. The instructions recommended a more vertical pipe route with minimum turns, but I wanted to avoid

making a roof penetration. Now that the toilet installation was complete, how could I power this thing?

Solar power system

The 12-volt DC exhaust fan for the mobile version of the Sun-Mar toilet consumes 4 watts of power and must operate continuously, which equals 96 watt-hours per day (4 x 24 hrs.). Assuming there will be several days per week of cloudy weather, I decided to use a larger 75-watt solar photovoltaic panel to provide the fan power, which leaves more than enough solar energy for battery charging. Since most locations in this country receive at least 4 to 5 hours of peak sun per day, this should provide 300 watt-hours per day (75 watts x 4 hrs.) which is three times the exhaust fan daily load.

A battery allows storing the excess solar energy collected during the day so the fan and light can continue to operate at night and during periods of inclement weather. I chose

two 6-volt gel cell golf cart size batteries which are designed to handle the daily deep charge/discharge solar cycle that would soon destroy a standard car battery. The gel cell version of this battery eliminates the need for periodic water refilling and does not require a liquid electrolyte that could spill, which is perfect for mobile applications.

The two 6-volt batteries wired in series provide the 12-volts needed for the fan and lights. A solar module should face south in the northern hemisphere to maximize solar collection, which is a problem for a mobile application that could be facing any direction while parked or moving. Mounting the module flat on the roof would produce the same solar energy collection regardless of which way the vehicle is turned, but the flat mounting angle would greatly reduce



*Initial mounting of self-contained compost toilet in trailer.
A plywood wall was installed to create the restroom.*



*Three 75-watt solar module installed
on the side of a 12-foot storage trailer*



12-volt DC exhaust fan and 3-inch vent piping after installation

winter performance due to the low sun angle. I decided to mount the 75-watt module on the side of the trailer that faces south when parked next to my house. This provides a fully charged battery for the next trip or project.

You cannot wire batteries directly to a solar module without a solar charge controller, as this would overcharge the battery during a sunny day and discharge the battery at night. I purchased a Morningstar Model 55 photovoltaic 12-volt charge controller with low voltage disconnect option. This is an excellent controller designed to charge both liquid and gel cell batteries, and its low voltage load disconnect will keep the exhaust fan from totally discharging the battery during long periods of cloudy weather. It has many built-in safety features and a small LED light to indicate charging status. I added a switch and in-line automotive type fuse between the controller and the exhaust fan. This allows shutting off the fan for extended non-use periods, which greatly increases battery life.

Since the trailer now had a fully functioning solar charged battery sys-

tem of its own, it seemed a waste to only power a tiny toilet exhaust fan, so I disconnected the interior dome lights from the trailer hitch electrical feed and rewired these to the new solar power system. This is really convenient when you need to find a tool or part inside and the trailer is not connected to the tow vehicle for power. I also added a small 12-volt fluorescent light that includes its own switch and produces much more light than the small dome light, and a 120-volt AC battery charger to plug in when parked for extended periods as a backup for the solar charging system.

To complete my bathroom on wheels, I installed a standard vanity sink base and a very deep sink basin. The deep sink will hold a large volume of water without splashing out when moving if I am parked where draining the soapy water onto the ground is not acceptable. I purchased a 15-gallon RV fresh water tank and



Initial filling of the rotating drum with compost



Placing the bags of Zeolite and activated charcoal in the fan box

exterior mounted hose fill plug from a marine supply store, which I mounted near the ceiling directly above the sink. At this elevation, a pressure pump or expansion tank is not required. Opening the sink faucet allows the water in the tank to drain into the sink. Although the water is not heated, it does allow washing your hands and face at job or camp sites that do not have restroom facilities.

So where's the smell?

After the installation was complete and in use, I was expecting what I usually smell (and unfortunately see) in those portable fiberglass johns everyone rents for fairs, races, and large public events. However, a composting toilet is very different. First, the seat is higher above the floor, so a small fold down step increases comfort. This increased height is necessary to accommodate the large rotating drum and various internal chambers, but this design also increases the visual distance down which almost completely blocks your view of what you may prefer not to see.



Dual 6-volt gel cell golf cart batteries and backup AC battery charger

The exhaust fan is mounted inside a fiberglass box having a removable lid. During installation and setup, two nylon mesh bags (also included with the supplies) are placed in this fan box. The first bag contains what looks like limestone rocks, but are actually Zeolite. This natural mineral is a virtual "sponge" for ammonia, a common by-product of urine. The second bag contains activated charcoal pellets, a material that can remove most other objectionable contaminants except ammonia from the exhaust air. Together these materials filter and remove all "smell" from the toilet exhaust air, so the odor is completely gone even if you were stand-

ing right next to the exhaust outlet. Since this fan runs continuously, room air is drawn down through the lid and into the toilet, meaning there is no possibility of foul air floating up and out of the interior chambers prior to being filtered and exhausted.

How it works

During initial setup, several cubic feet of peat mulch is added to the rotating drum through a small flip door that lines up with the opening under the toilet seat. A small packet of harmless bacteria and a half-gallon of warm water is also added to get the bacteria-driven compost process started. After every few uses, you dump in a scoop of mulch from a closed storage container normally located next to the toilet. After adding the mulch, a front-mounted crank is turned several times which rotates the compost drum inside the toilet. A mechanical latch prevents the drum from stopping out of line with the top opening. This drum rotation covers the waste and mixes everything together much like you do with a compost pile. When the drum is rotating, the small flapper door closes to keep the composted material from falling out the bottom. Just below this rotating drum is a removable drawer that holds any already composted waste, which at this point is virtually organic dirt. The drum also includes a screen that allows any excess liquid to drain into an evaporator tray located at the bottom of the toilet below the removable drawer.



Closeup view of solar charge controller and fan shut-off switch

Although completely sealed thanks to the one piece molded construction, this tray includes a one-inch plastic safety overflow pipe which prevents any spillage if the toilet is used by far more people than it was designed to handle. The small 120-volt AC heating element and automatic thermostat are located directly under this evaporator tray. This heater greatly speeds up waste liquid evaporation when the toilet is used on a daily basis.

Assuming the toilet is not used by more people and more often than it was designed for, the finishing or

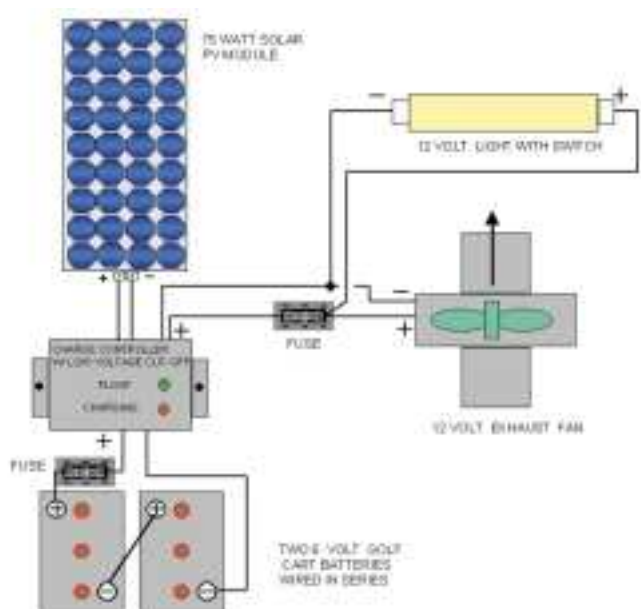
Books and websites on composting toilets

Oikos Bookstore
www.oikos.com

Compost Basics Library
www.wastenot-organics.wisc.edu

Compost Resource Page
www.oldgrowth.org/compost

The World of Composting Toilets
www.compostingtoilet.org



Wiring diagram



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holding drawer may only need to be emptied once or twice each year. When the rotating drum is almost full, you turn the crank "backwards" for several turns which causes the flapper door to open and some of the composted material to fall down into the drawer where it will finish its composting and drying. Although at this point I have not needed to empty this drawer, the manufacturer assures

me this material is harmless and can be used as garden fertilizer. As for me, I'm thinking garbage bag into the trash can when that time finally comes.

Conclusions

Whether you are building a remote weekend cabin and do not or cannot install a conventional flush toilet and septic system, or looking for a toilet for your RV or boat that does not require daily draining, there is a compost toilet available in a size and configuration to meet almost any application.

Jeff Yago's latest book titled, *Achieving Energy Independence—One Step At A Time*, provides a good introduction to solar power systems, and includes lots of ideas to help make your home as energy efficient as possible. It is available from the *Backwoods Home Magazine's* Bookstore (page 88) or by calling 804-784-0063. Δ

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Cracklin's

An irresistible snack that you can't stop sneakin'

By Linda Gabris

When I was a girl growing up in the backwoods, one of my favorite times of the year was autumn when grandpa would butcher a pig to put up for winter. Regardless of the sadness I felt as the time drew near for our specially chosen oinker to meet his impending Waterloo, I still looked forward to the season with much mouth-watering anticipation.

On pig butchering day, grandpa would rise long before daybreak and by the time grandmother and I had the morning fire lit and a kettle of dandelion coffee perking, the most unpleasant part of the job would be over. The plump porker that I had spent the summer fattening up for the larder with armloads of pig-weed and buckets of swill had, almost magically, turned into two sides of pork ready to be made into all kinds of good eats to enjoy over the long winter months ahead.

After blessings were given, grandpa, grandmother, and I would set about putting up the pig, which meant a long day's work making good use out of every part of the animal, from the snout to the hoofs. As much as I liked pickled pigs feet, salted belly, headcheese, smoked hooks, and bacon, my favorite treat was, and still is, the cracklings, or as we called them—*cracklin's*!

Cracklin's are crispy, tasty tidbits of pork that are left over from the lard-making process. Since my grandparents were very self sufficient—putting up most of their own provi-

sions—homemade lard was an important staple for our household as grandma never had options of cooking with expensive store-bought butter or fancy vegetable oils. Even if she had, I'm sure she would still have preferred homemade lard above all else.

To this day I, too, prefer to use homemade lard for all of my frying and baking needs. Even though I don't raise a pig every year in the old manner like my grandparents did, keeping with tradition I still indulge in the age-old craft of making lard and, in turn, ending up with a delightful mess of cracklin's to boot.

Making lard is a fun activity that can be enjoyed in all seasons since most butcher shops these days have a ready supply of pork fat that is inexpensive and can be purchased not only in fall, but throughout the entire year! Because I like cracklin's so much, I often make a batch of lard even when my supply isn't running

low in order to render the special treat. When I have a craving for cracklin's and my lard pot isn't yet empty, I melt down a kettle of fresh lard and treat the birds to my old batch. Making suet for the birds is a delightful way to put excess or old lard to good use.

Even though animal fats have—in the past number of years—gained a bad reputation as being cholesterol-makers, I believe that when eaten in moderation by healthy folks, with active lifestyles, it can still be enjoyed just as it was by our ancestors. My grandparents both lived long into their nineties with no fear whatsoever of pork fat being bad for their health!

All of grandmother's recipes for biscuits, pies, fried fish, and birds called for the use of lard and I can vouch for the fact that her pastries were light and flaky and her grouse as finger lickin' as any chicken. And grandpa and grandmother—even in



Cracklin's, fresh lard, and buttermilk biscuits—what a treat!

old age—were a fast-footed pair hard to keep up with.

Since cracklin's are a by-product of lard, in order to end up with a special treat of these munchies, you'll have to first make a batch of creamy smooth, fragrant lard. To do this, go to your butchershop and ask for a couple slabs of pork fat or you can contact a local pig farmer to see if they have any available fat fresh off the farm. My supplier sells pork fat in rolls of about 3 to 5 pounds. One of these rolls will melt down into about one or two quarts of lard. From this, you will get an ample plateful of cracklin's.

There are different kinds of pork fat and the very best for pastry lard is said to be that which comes from the layer next to the bacon strips, known as leaf fat. Usually leaf fat is harder to obtain so if you're not picky, like me, you'll be happy with shoulder, loin, or back fat which, in my opinion, are all great for lard. The caul (stomach) and ruffle (from around the intestines) fats can be used for lard too, but they will produce a slightly stronger flavor and darker grease more suitable for frying than for baking. However, if cracklin's are your number one concern, then go with whatever you can get. The grease from all these fats is equally delicious and, as far as I'm concerned, work well in all recipes.

When you purchase fresh pork fat, you can ask for skinless slabs or that which still has on the rind. Personally, I like pieces that come with the rind on as this makes the best cracklin's for eating out of hand—ones with lots of crunch. Rindless fat produces a softer, puffier cracklin's which are excellent when crumbled and added to biscuit dough or sprinkled on cornbread.

Once home from the market, chill the fat until it is firm, as cold fat is much easier to handle. If the fat has been previously frozen, wrap in a tea towel and thaw in refrigerator. When



Fresh pork fat ready to melt down for lard and cracklin's

ready to use, pat well with paper towels to remove all traces of moisture.

Using a sharp knife, cut the fat into uniform cubes a bit plumper than the size of playing dice. Put a handful into a large, heavy kettle—do not use aluminum or glass, as they might not be able to withstand the extreme heat—and melt until the bottom of the pan is well greased. Add the rest of the fat, making sure the kettle is never more than 2/3 full as it could boil over and splatter.

Over medium heat, stir with a long handled wooden spoon until the fat begins to fry down. As the fat melts, the grease level will rise. Be extremely careful when stirring as the hot liquid can cause severe burns if splashed on the skin. Never allow children near the stove when making lard! As the grease fries out of the cubes, the cracklin's will begin to rise to the top of the kettle. Once they have all turned a golden brown and have surfaced, it is time to remove the kettle from the heat. Again, be sure to handle very carefully.

Using a metal strainer or sieve, strain the grease into another heavy-bottomed kettle, catching the cracklin's in the sieve. Using a wooden spoon, force the remaining grease out of the cracklin's by pressing against

the sieve. DON'T use plastic strainers, as they will surely melt.

Once strained, spread the cracklin's on a clean tea towel or several thickness of paper towels to help absorb remaining grease. While hot, season with salt, pepper, and cayenne—if you like your snacks with extra kick.

After the lard has cooled down it is ready to be ladled into your lard pot. If you don't have an earthen lard pot as I do, then a sterile canning jar or a coffee tin makes suitable lard tubs. The lard can be stored in the refrigerator or frozen. My grandmother kept a handy pot of lard at room temperature in the cupboard as we didn't have a fridge or freezer and it saved very well. Every so often she would send me to the root cellar to get a refill from her big earthen lard crock.

When using the lard for dessert pies or pastries, scoop from the top of the pot as this is the purest. Lard scraped from the bottom of the lard dish will contain traces of cracklin's. This tasty sediment is great when used as fat for biscuits or savory meat pies. The specks also taste mighty good when spread on top of golden cornbread. My grandparents and I used the "bottoms" of the lard pot as spread for fresh baked bread and topping for baked and mashed potatoes.

Once the cracklin's have finally stopped crackling—and they really do snap and crackle as their name implies—the time has come for tasting. Try one. But let me warn you—you can never stop at just one! If you're like me, you'll be sneaking and snacking til there's nothing left but a lick of salt!

Whether you enjoy a couple cracklin's and a biscuit for lunch or tote a pocket full to munch on as you hike your favorite trail, nothing makes a better bite! Cracklin's can be made into a delicious trail mix sure to become a family favorite. A snack that's guaranteed to give you energy to burn...

Cracklin' trail mix

This is a delicious pocket treat that is not only nutritious, but saves exceptionally well and is quite cheap to make.

Mix together:

2 cups cracklin's
3 cups raisins
1 cup dried apricots
1 cup sliced dried apple rings
3 cups nuts (peanuts or mixed nuts, whichever you prefer)
1 cup dried cranberries (or a mix of dried berries if you do your own. I dry my own blueberries and add to this mix. If you don't have home-dried blueberries, then currants work well in their place).

You can add any other dried fruit or vegetable you fancy to the above. Divvy up into little zip lock bags. Store in a cool, dry place.

Buttermilk biscuits

4 cups flour
pinch of salt
3 tsp. baking powder
½ cup homemade lard (scoop from the bottom)
1¼ cup buttermilk

Mix dry ingredients. Blend in lard. Stir in the buttermilk until dough can be formed into a ball (You may need a little more or less buttermilk than above). Pat on floured board and cut into circles. Place on baking sheet and bake at 400°F until golden brown. For a wonderful lunch, serve these biscuits with a few cracklin's and a crisp sour pickle.

Pie crust

2 cups flour
pinch of salt
½ cup lard (from the top of the pot)
¼ cup cold water

Mix dry ingredients. Cut in lard. Sprinkle with cold water (using more or less as needed) in order to form a ball. Roll out on floured board and use in your favorite recipes for pie.

Homemade suet for birds

When your hankering for cracklin's lands you with more lard than you need, you can always make a special treat for the birds out of excess or old lard.

lard
peanut butter
wild bird feed (a mix of seeds and grain)
corn meal (if you wish)

Mix above ingredients not bothering to worry about measures. What you want is a combination that you can form into balls or shape into cakes. A neat idea is to take this mixture and, using your hands, press it into pinecones. These hang very nicely from your backyard trees and the birds seem to fancy them.

The best eggs in the world are those that are fried in homemade lard. The only way to prove this is by testing for yourself! Chicken, liver, steak, potatoes, onions ... almost any fryable is so much tastier when done in lard. Just try it! Δ

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Portable fence panels: the homesteader's friend

by Jackie Clay

It seems that things are always changing on our homestead. Last year, the biggest garden was 100 by 150 feet. This year, we doubled its size. And because we have plenty of deer and free-range poultry, this garden must be fenced. In it, we grow our most critter-prone vegetables: sweet corn, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, tomatoes, and peppers. (They pretty much leave the other crops alone.)

You can see why we don't put up a permanent wire fence around the garden. There are other places a portable fence is needed: the chicken yard, hay stack and strawberry beds, for instance.

For years, we monkeyed around with Mickey Mouse fencing, and were always disappointed. Even high electric fence did not keep the deer out, and it certainly didn't bother the chickens. Finally, after hauling home a large truckload of "firewood" from

a post and pole mill, I had a great idea.

A good part of that load was 12-foot long, two-inch diameter poles that were too thin for the debarking machine to peel. And I certainly wasn't about to cut all those nice poles into stove wood.

These poles were the basis for our niftiest invention yet—portable fence panels. These panels can be as wide as your poles, but 10 and 12 feet seem to work out best. Wider and they tend to be heavy and flimsy. Narrower and you need too many fence posts on the fence line.

Uses for portable fence panels

The thing I like about portable fence panels is the variety of applications they can be used for. With livestock, they are excellent temporary fencing for goats, sheep, and calves.

Poultry can effectively be kept in—or out with this fence.

We fence around our haystack in the fall to keep out deer, bighorn sheep, and elk, and around the gardens in the spring and summer for the same reason.

Portable fence panels work well as temporary gates or pens in a shed.

I also use the panels to trellis up beans, cucumbers and other vining crops. Lean them together at the top, and you have a temporary support for plastic, in case of an unexpected freeze.

I'm confident that you can think of other uses for these portable panels. They are truly versatile and nearly free.

Construction materials

You can use just about any straight poles but they should be of two inches in diameter at a minimum. Of course you can use heavier poles, but

the panel will be heavier and cease to be portable. If you use thinner poles, the panel will not last as long because it will break more easily.

We've used lodgepole pine, but cedar, oak, and even aspen or poplar would work.

By peeling the bark off the poles, they will rot much slower and therefore last much longer than unpeeled poles which collect moisture. Likewise, if you take the time to slap a coat of sealant stain on them, you will add several years to their life.

I use 6-foot poles for the uprights on either end. If it's leaping deer that you want to fence out, I'd suggest going another foot higher. Our deer don't bother jumping the 5½-foot fence, but we could tack a wire on the top if one decided to become airborne.

We tack the panels together with 16-penny nails. This gives good strong joints and the nails don't poke through the uprights.

Panel construction

We quickly learned that we needed a pattern to speed up building. Without the pattern, we spent way too much time measuring and marking. Therefore, the first fence panel we made that met our satisfaction became our pattern. The others became garden trellises, etc.

Take two poles and lay them out 8½ feet apart if you are going to use 10-foot cross poles or 10½ feet if you are going to use 12-foot poles. You want from 5 to 10 inches of "overlap" which sticks out past the uprights for the most utility when you put them up.

Our panels have the cross poles nailed on from the bottom up in this order: 8, 10, 12, and 18-inch spacing between the poles, not on center. Make one up and take a look, deciding on what you will be using it the most for, then either use that for the pattern or change it to suit your needs.

One nail (or screw) in the center of each pole is adequate; two will split the pole. Take care to keep the entire panel square as you nail on rails. One or more helpers, along with a large square is more than useful. Things bounce around and get out of square as you pound.

You'll notice that this panel is very flimsy. That is why it is necessary to nail on two brace poles as an inverted V from halfway down the "leg" of the upright post to the center of the top rail. We use the same diameter poles for the entire panel, including these braces.

To add the diagonal braces, have your helper get hold of one side of the panel and you take the other. Carefully turn it over and square it again.

Mark the center of the panel on the top rail and lay a pole in position. Then, taking a chain saw, trim the angle needed for the bottom of the brace. Have your helper hold the brace in place at the top, then spike the leg to the bottom of the brace pole. Then go around and do the top, followed up by a nail through the brace into each of the five cross poles. Again, take care that the whole panel stays square. It's easy to mess up by getting in a hurry at this point.

The reason that I don't trim the top off before I nail it is that if you do this, the pole will usually split when



These panels are so quick to build. My husband, Bob, and I do three in one hour.

you drive a nail through it. (Using screws with a battery-powered drill will cause fewer splits.)

Repeat with the other diagonal brace, completing the upside-down V and your panel. Again, be sure to keep the panel square when you nail (or screw) the second brace in place.

Now you are ready to trim the panel to fit. I don't bother to trim each pole before I build the panel. It's much quicker and easier to trim it afterward. Do make sure that all uprights are the same height. When laying out the panels, I always keep the "feet" the same length, for ease of measuring for the cross poles.

Voilà! You have just made a portable fence panel. The first will take awhile, but remember, this is your pattern, which will make all the others go so much faster.

Photo by David Clay



These panels work. This is me in my critter-free garden.

So go at it again, only this time lay out your poles on top of your pattern panel. I've found that if you tack each upright pole to a center cross pole on a diagonal so you don't get the nail in your way, it greatly helps keep things square.

In less than 15 minutes, you and a helper can spike together the next rough panel, less the braces. Now pull those temporary nails and carefully pick up the panel and carry it end-for-end and set the "feet" on the ground. Carefully lay the panel down on top of the pattern. In this way, you'll get the diagonal braces exactly the same. This looks much nicer on a fence than random measurements. And it ensures that each panel is as strong as the next.

Unless you have two helpers, it's best to again temporarily spike the upright to the upright beneath it in the center. I put these nails about two inches from a cross pole, which lets me use the pole as a block to pull out the nail nice and straight. (I reuse my nails—like I do almost everything else.)

Critter-proofing

Deer, bighorn sheep, moose, and elk do not jump or crawl through these fence panels. But chickens or cottontail rabbits would simply duck and walk under. So we add a two foot high strip of two inch chicken wire to the bottom of each panel. Of course this would not deter a very determined woodchuck or raccoon (more on that later), but it will keep out most any poultry or bunny—and also your pet dog who might tramp on the garden plants. Notice, I said keep your dog out. This fence will not contain a dog, as chicken wire is not strong enough.

To re-enforce these fence panels for goats or sheep, you need to add a four foot strip of 2 x 4 heavy-gauge welded or woven wire. By stapling the wire to each individual panel, you will keep them portable, and thus, much more useful than if you staple the entire roll of wire to, say 100-feet of fence.

But, say you have persistent varmints (or even neighbor pets) that you need to keep out. You can further reinforce this fence with one or more strands of electric wire. For small critters, add a wire five inches up

from the bottom. A stand-off wire three feet high will keep stray goats and sheep from trying to push through or climb on your fence. This fence is made by nailing plastic stand-off insulators to the fence, which holds the wire about five inches out from the poles. Therefore, the animal contacts the wire before getting on or near the fence panel.

Add a top hot wire if your neighborhood deer are prone to leaping. Tie a few white, fluttering bits of plastic or cloth to it, so they realize there *is* a wire way up there.

Putting up your fence panels

In small areas, it is usually best to anchor each end of your portable panel to a six-foot heavy duty T-post, driven well into the ground. The smaller the area, the more stress to the fence, especially if you are fencing a critter in, rather than out. I use a heavy, but bendable electric fence wire to wire each panel tightly to the T-posts' top, middle, and bottom and never yet have had an animal escape.

On longer runs, such as in my garden, I often pound a T-post at the end of a panel, then a sharpened 3-inch wood post at the other end, fastening



We have just finished this panel. (It's upside-down.) It shows the pattern panel underneath.

the next panel to that, then another steel post on the other end of that panel, so your posts are in this order: steel, wood, steel, wood, etc. It makes a strong fence, yet is half the cost of an all T-post fence. If you are short, like I am, you may have to stand on the tailgate of your pickup or on a sturdy ladder to pound those wood posts with a maul. You can't use a T-post driver on them.

When erecting portable panels to protect a haystack, use all steel posts, and make your "corral" large enough that animals won't try to reach through to nibble on the hay. That spells doom to lightweight fence panels. If necessary, you can either make haystack panels out of heavier posts and rails or add a stand-off electric wire about four feet high, all around the fence.

But I have no power

No problem. We don't have power, either, and have an electric wire inside most of our existing fence to

strengthen it and make it last longer. One of the best investments we've made has been a solar electric fencer. Not only does it protect our fence, but also our garden, and it keeps stray cats and raccoons out of our bluebird houses. It's amazing what a little strand of hot wire will do. Ask at a farm and ranch supply store. Our fencer cost \$100 on sale and has worked faithfully year-round without any maintenance or trouble. A neighbor has had his (same model as ours) for years with great luck.

Using portable panels as garden trellises

While heavier vines will climb the portable fence panels without support, we've found that adding some sort of netting (nylon, old field fence, or even twine) pays big dividends on the growth of plants up the trellis.

Use a steel T-post on either end of the trellis, as wind will blow it down if you don't. All those plant vines and

leaves will create a "wall" for the strong wind to blow against.

By using these trellises, you will be able to grow more in the same space. Even cukes love to be trellised, even if you have to "help" them by gently tying them here and there. And they'll reward you by hanging clean and straight. Right where you can easily pick them.

These portable fence panels make such great trellises, as they are so sturdy, they will hold a bounty year after year with no wear and tear. You may have to replace a twine net on one, but the poles are good to go for years. And, being portable, you can change your garden to suit your needs and yank all your trellises in 15 minutes.

Whatever material you have at hand, I hope you'll give our portable fence panels a try. We've scarcely anything else on the place that is so versatile, long lasting...or *cheap*. I figured it out that each panel cost us 28¢. Not bad, huh? Δ

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Preserving fish

By Tom R. Kovach

The four most popular methods of fish preservation are freezing, canning, pickling, and smoking. Here are some tips for each.

Remember, top quality fresh fish are essential for fish preservation. Of all flesh foods, fish is the most susceptible to tissue decomposition, development of rancidity, and microbial spoilage. Keep freshly caught fish alive as long as possible. Fish begin to deteriorate as soon as they leave the water. To delay spoilage, clean the fish as soon as possible. Thorough cleaning of the body cavity and chilling of the fish will prevent spoilage.

Freezing

This is the simplest, most convenient, and most highly recommended method of fish preservation. A good quality frozen product requires careful handling of the fish after catching, wrapping in material that is airtight, and a freezer storage temperature of 0° F or lower.

To freeze fish: Remove the guts and thoroughly clean the fish. Prepare the fish as you would for table use. Cut large fish into steaks or fillets. Freeze small fish whole.

Wrap the fish in heavy-duty aluminum foil, plastic wrap, or heavy-duty freezer bags. Separate layers of fish with two thicknesses of packaging material for easier thawing. Store at 0° F or lower. Thaw in refrigerator when ready.

Small fish (pan fish or small servings) can be frozen in ice. Place the fish in a shallow pan or

water-tight container, cover with ice water, and place in freezer until frozen. Remove block from container, wrap, and store in freezer.

The storage life of good quality frozen fish held at 0° F or lower: Northern pike, lake trout, and smelt: four to six months. Bluegills, bass, crappies, and sunfish: seven to nine months. Walleys and yellow perch: nine months or more.

Canning

Fish is a low acid food and can be processed safely only at temperatures reached in a steam pressure canner.

Failure to heat process fish at 240° F or higher may allow spores of the dangerous heat-resistant bacteria, *Clostridium botulinum*, to survive, germinate, and grow.

The poison produced by botulinum bacteria causes botulism, a deadly food poisoning. The addition of small amounts of vinegar, or packing in tomato juice or tomato paste, does not remove the requirement for heat processing fish in a pressure canner.

Use standard heat-tempered canning jars. All processing times mentioned here are for 1-pint containers. Do not use quart jars because of slower heat penetration.

The general USDA method for canning fish without sauce includes blue, mackeral, salmon, steelhead, trout,



tuna.

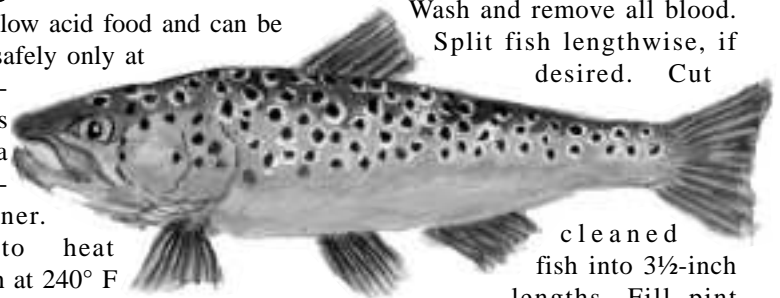
Clean and gut fish within two hours after catching. Keep cleaned fish on ice until ready to can.

Note: Glass-like crystals of magnesium ammonium phosphate sometimes form in canned salmon. There is no way for the home canner to prevent these crystals from forming, but they usually dissolve when heated and are safe to eat.

Remove head, tail, fins, and scales.

Wash and remove all blood.

Split fish lengthwise, if desired. Cut



cleaned fish into 3½-inch lengths. Fill pint

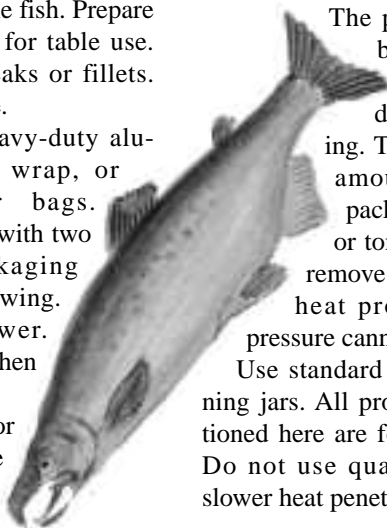
jars, skin side next to glass, leaving 1-inch headspace. Add 1 teaspoon of salt per pint. Don't add liquids. Adjust lids and process.

Recommended processing for a dial-gauge pressure canner is 100 minutes at 11 PSI. For a weighed-gauge pressure canner, 100 minutes at 15 PSI.

Remove jars from canner. Place jars upright on a dry, nonmetallic surface (towels, board, or newspaper may be used). Heat fish to boiling temperatures for 10 minutes before tasting.

Pickling

Pickling is an easy method of preserving fish, but remember to refrigerate the fish during all stages of the pickling.



Ingredients:

Fish—use only fresh, high quality fish

Water—avoid hard water, as it causes off color and flavors

Vinegar—use distilled, white vinegar with an acetic acid content of at least 4% (40 grains)

Salt—use high grade canning or pickling salt

Spices—best results when fresh, whole spices are used

General method for precooked pickled fish:

Soak fish in a weak brine (1 cup salt to 1 gallon of water) for one hour. Drain the fish, pack in heavy glass, crock, enamel, or plastic container in a strong brine (2½ cups salt to 1 gallon of water) for 12 hours in the refrigerator. Rinse the fish in cold water.

Combine the following ingredients in a large pan or kettle:

¼ oz. bay leaves
2 Tbsp. allspice
2 Tbsp. mustard seed
1 Tbsp. whole cloves
1 Tbsp. pepper, ground
½ Tbsp. hot, ground dried pepper
½ lb. onions, sliced
2 qt. distilled vinegar
5 cups water

Bring to boil, add fish, and simmer for 10 minutes until fish is easily pierced with a fork.

Remove fish from liquid, place on a flat pan. Refrigerate and cool quickly to avoid spoilage. Pack cold fish in clean glass jars, adding a few whole spices, a bay leaf, freshly sliced onions, and a slice of lemon.

Strain the



vinegar solution, bring to a boil, and pour into jars until fish is covered.

Seal the jar immediately with two-part sealing lid.

Smoking

Smoking has long been used as a means of temporarily preserving fish. The steps in the smoking process are necessary not only for safe preservation, but also to produce good flavor and aroma. Carp, suckers, buffalo catfish, salmon, trout, and chubs may be successfully smoked.

Use the correct amount of salt in the brine. Use enough brine for a given amount of fish. The temperature must be no higher than 40° F. Use similar size and kinds of fish.

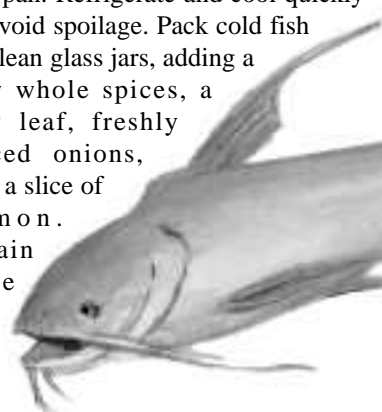
There should be uniform heat in the smoking chamber. Fish flesh should be maintained at 180° F for the total smoking period.

Steps for safe smoking:

- Use freshly caught fish, whole or filleted. Wash fish. Fish for smoking must be brined.
- 1½ cup salt to 1 gal. water for 12 hours in the refrigerator, remove the fish *then* place in a mixture of 4 cups salt to 1 gal. cold water for 15 minutes.
- Remove from brine, rinse. Place short stem of meat thermometer in thickest portion of flesh of largest fish. Put fish in smoker when air temperature is 100° F (you need a second thermometer to measure this).

During smoking, air temperature should

rise to 225° F. Fish flesh should reach 180° F and be kept there for 30 minutes. Fish flesh must be stored in refrigerator. Use within one month. Δ



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There's money in MUSIC

By Don Chance

I'll be the first to acknowledge that making money from music isn't for everyone, even trained musicians. But this article is about providing casual musical services on a part-time basis, not the hard-core commitment it takes to make a career of it. I believe that just about anyone with the kind of ambition and entrepreneurial savvy it takes to be self-sufficient, no matter the level of musical talent, can turn a few hours a month into a few more bills paid around the homeplace. And have a good time doing it.

Those of you who've already experienced the pleasure of making music for an audience for pay will probably agree with me when I say that everyone likes music. On the earliest homesteads, fiddles, guitars, harmonicas, banjos, and later pump organs and maybe a piano somewhere in the area made the long days of soul-deep weariness a little easier to survive. (And some sociologists think one of the main reasons churches were usually welcomed into rough-hewn new frontier settlements was not so much for their settling effect, but because they'd bring music.)

Getting closer to more modern times, even fancy new wind-up Victrolas and early battery radios couldn't keep the determined young farmhands from learning to pick out a few songs on real instruments, with

the best establishing themselves as invaluable resources throughout the community.

Radio and a constantly evolving sound recording industry were supposed to signal the end of live performance. It didn't happen. Then television with its lavishly staged musical spectacles supposedly signaled the end of dressing up to go out to a concert where, again, real musicians were employed. Again, it didn't happen.



More recently, the incessant hum of the personal computer, with its potential for allowing almost anyone capable of clicking a mouse to think of themselves as a bona-fide musical artist, was hyped as the death knell for the working musician's income. It didn't happen that time either.

The point here being: no matter how many complicated new gadgets they come up with to replace it, live music, and those who provide and market it, and especially those who take the time and effort to learn to

play it, will always be in demand. Humanity just enjoys being present when music is being made, and will usually pay for it.

And since there's money to be made from that music, why not make it? I did for many years.

Talent?

But first, let's settle on just what "musical talent" is, and what it isn't. The heavily overburdened word "talent" has kept more people from enjoying the simple pleasure of making music than just about any other impediment. As the only accomplished musician from a large southern family, take it from me: the talent is not in the pedigree, it's in the desire.

While some rare prodigies are in fact born with an almost instinctive aptitude for understanding how music is created and/or performed, not only are they the exception, they had to learn to play the same way all do: through practice. If you already have the kind of imagination and determination it takes to even consider the self-reliant lifestyle, taking up an instrument will come to seem as natural to you as basic carpentry or animal husbandry, even if you hadn't thought much about it before.

Like hand-crafting a fine piece of furniture or sewing together a prize-

winning quilt, the ability to play a guitar, for example, is a manual dexterity skill anyone can learn simply by working at it until it makes sense. (Think it even requires a full complement of fingers? Hah! Django Reinhardt, considered one of the finest guitarists to ever take up the instrument, played brilliantly with only a thumb and two fingers on his left hand, as did several notable concert pianists whose entire right arms were missing.)

Once you have the dexterity, the theory side of music works in strictly defined patterns and processes—if you can learn mathematical or weather patterns, or remember complicated recipes or electrical formulas, you should be able to easily understand basic music theory, such as how chords and melodies work together. And it doesn't take years to learn.

I went what I thought of as the “conventional route,” growing up playing guitar and piano in the small Pentecostal churches where my father was the pastor, learning saxophones in public school starting in the 7th grade, starting college on a woodwinds scholarship, leaving college to go on the road as a full-time pro at age 20, and playing in almost every kind of live music venue and setting there is over the next couple of decades. Almost all the other money-making musicians I met in my career (and you've probably heard many of them on the radio) were pretty much self-taught. In other words, there is *no* conventional route.

Along the way, I also met thousands involved in the business of turning sound into sound bank accounts who weren't full-time players like me. They were schoolteachers, store clerks, lawyers, pizza delivery guys, cowboys, politicians, oil field workers, chiropractors, farmers, and so on, out hustling music on the side. And these were not always practiced-up musicians.

So don't let the word “talent” stop you because, after all, it's really just another overused word. It's more about determination than genes.

Music opportunities

Before we get to the specific types of music jobs out there, let's talk a little about three of the most common types of business practices involved in making ends meet with music. These are direct pay, barter, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Direct pay is just that: you work out an agreement with a music buyer on musical material, prices, and times, and he pays you for your performance.

Some casual buyers, such as bar owners or fathers-of-the-bride, do require tax information but most write it off as cash outlay for services rendered.

Barter opportunities, of course, offer the chance to trade music for something else. For instance, your neighbor wants someone to play guitar and sing at his barbecue, and you need someone to tune up your pickup. You probably won't get an entire overhaul just for singing a few songs and eating some barbecue, or for rounding up a competent performer if you can't do it yourself, but as the deal evolves you might get someone to give you an even more expert hand with the truck than your neighbor. And besides, just helping make the barbecue a success could lead to other barter or for-pay arrangements.

Entrepreneurial opportunities are those musical events at which you don't actually perform. For example, making a deal to keep local fraternal lodges or taverns supplied with dance bands should pay a booking commission of between 10 and 15 percent of the group's fee. Of course, at first you need to spend a certain time scouting appropriate acts for this to work as a long-term project. But when word gets around that you're the agent to

contact, bands will soon come calling.

The good news is that of these three categories, only the first specifically demands some kind of “talent-based” expertise as an instrumentalist or singer. Some bookings can combine two or even all three of these types of opportunities. But no matter how complicated they might seem, they're all just deals to be worked out.

Tune 'em up and let's play!

Since none of this would work without the musician, let's talk about the musician's direct role in casual music-for-hire.

Many otherwise perfectly competent musicians who play beautifully in private will not qualify here due to plain old stage fright. Though I've never experienced it, I really do understand the sudden lack of self-confidence the idea of getting up in front of a crowd of expectant people and taking a chance on blowing it can cause in some people. I've seen grown women, and even some men, burst into tears and literally run from the stage when they thought it was going badly. But believe me, the crowd is on your side. They want to see you shine every bit as much as you. Just remember, learning to play an instrument is much harder than playing it for an audience. And shyness, like any other mild phobia, can be overcome. Hang in there, and if you really, really want it, you'll eventually join the band.

For the rest of you, if you don't already run to the nearest stage at the first invitation, instruments in your hands and songs on your lips, there are probably more ways to make a buck or two with your musical ability than you might have considered.

Besides obvious dollar-generating venues such as bars, nightclubs, weddings, and bar mitzvahs, experienced performers, alone or with bands, can charge for playing at funerals, corpo-

rate special events (such as awards banquets or employee picnics), church functions, family reunions (of other families, of course), tourist traps, retirement centers, and casual in-home celebrations of all kinds—including housewarmings, holiday parties, barn raisings, anniversary receptions, and so on. And don't forget to contact as many professional caterers as you can find, as caterers are often asked to recommend entertainment for the special occasions they arrange.

As far as pay, most non-private functions have pre-calculated budgets that specifically include entertainment expenses. Figure to charge between \$60 and \$100 for every musician for groups, and \$100-up for a solo (single) performer such as a singer/guitarist or pianist. One of my personal guides is that if an engagement is for, or sponsored by, a for-profit entity such as a shopping center or roadside attraction, charge as much as you can get away with.

Fees for private jobs will vary, according to how well you know the people doing the hiring. But if some wealthy rancher I don't really know all that well wants to hire me to entertain his equally wealthy friends in his air-conditioned and lavishly outfitted indoor horse arena—and this has happened several times in my life—I'm going to get as much out of it as I can, and not feel guilty later.

Even if direct pay or barter isn't involved in your bookings, there are other ways to turn them into money-makers. I know several people who self-produce simple CDs on the home computer, at less than a buck a copy, and sell them for between five and ten dollars apiece at flea markets, craft shows, local "Opry" shows, and civic "Springfest" or "Pioneer Days" celebrations.

Lots of musicians and bands with recordings also make deals with local retail stores to carry their product. While some shopkeepers will buy the

finished albums outright, most find percentage-based consignment arrangements work best. And there's no better passive advertising than having CDs with your name on them while out making the rounds.

Teaching music

Hanging out your shingle as a music teacher is also a time-honored way of bringing in ready cash. Half-hour lessons can be scheduled for an afternoon or evening's time, and given in your home or in the student's home (which should bring higher lesson prices). Guitar and piano lessons can also be given in local music or craft stores (with the possibility of the shop stocking supplies such as guitar strings and picks or lesson books); and offering small 8- to 10-student classes in guitar are a great way to keep the individual student's price down while still bringing in more money for the teacher's time.

Don't rule out offering continuing education classes at local junior colleges either. Private lessons should cost ten to twelve dollars for a half-hour, while longer evening classes (which can make for some fun, high-spirited social interaction) can easily fill up for between six and eight dollars per student. (Anything over a half hour for private lessons, though, and both the student and the teacher tend to be wasting their time as studies show little new information is actually retained over a longer period, especially by a beginner.)

"Filling in"

Truly skilled musicians with good reputations can usually get plenty of paying work by filling in for other musicians. Larger towns have several full-time freelance players who do nothing else but go from band to band, playing whatever kind of music the job requires, often on last-minute notice. While working this way requires more versatility, alertness and concentration than other situa-

tions, and familiarity with a wide variety of musical styles, freelancers don't necessarily have to be better musicians than anyone else on the stage—they just have to know how to blend in.

Also, ever consider going into square dance calling? With so many local square and round dance clubs springing up everywhere (I even once saw a club dancing behind the escalators at the airport in Las Vegas), learning how to guide the dancers through a quick stepper can make for a lively evening's pay, and calling is just another skill to learn.

Sound equipment blues

Whether you perform solo or with a group, you will eventually need some serious sound reinforcement equipment. New sound gear is expensive—the biggest investment you will make in selling your music, in fact.

But I've always been able to justify my equipment purchases (okay, salve my conscience at spending so much money at one time) by working out how many times I have to play to pay for it. For instance, when I bought a new Martin acoustic guitar (believe me, they're expensive) a couple of years ago I figured I'd need to play ten gigs at \$100 apiece before it started turning a profit. At that rate, it was making me money within two months, and I've used it on dozens and dozens of bookings since then. It has paid for itself many times over.

Even second-hand equipment can be pricey. But while a simple and dependable PA (public address) system, including a good mixer-amplifier, a couple of microphones, and a pair of speaker cabinets would cost around \$800 new, the same setup can be had for half that if you keep an eye on the musical merchandise column in the classifieds, or haunt the area music stores and pawn shops for trade-ins.

Four hundred dollars can go a long way toward satisfying some really

immediate needs around the homestead. But will a new chicken coop or tractor overhaul pay for itself after being used just a few times, then potentially go on to generate steady profits for years? It can be a tough decision.

But any hard worker knows that to do the job right you have to have the right tools. Musical instruments and any support equipment they require, are in the end nothing more than tools. As you become more experienced, you'll understand your equipment needs better.

Lots of deep-discount musical equipment catalogs are available online nowadays, and I've never heard of a music store that doesn't allow some kind of discount to steady customers (I've gotten as much as 40 to 50 percent off list price just by asking for it).

Although it's not a good idea to become over-equipped. No matter how many fancy new features manufacturers come out with every year, all you need is something dependable and easy to operate because electronic equipment has lousy resale value. Just keep in mind that it all needs to be stored carefully between uses to keep working well over the long haul. Take care of it, and it will take care of you. One of my sound systems has been making me regular money since I bought it new back in 1983, and it should go on doing so for as long as I keep it protected and maintained.

In addition to supporting your performances, your equipment can also be rented out for more income. Again, civic and corporate functions rarely have in-house equipment supplies to draw on, and often welcome the chance to rent a sound system for a day or two when buying it would blow much of the budget. Also, other musicians occasionally get into situations in which they need extra gear. But make sure you can trust them, or be there to keep a careful eye on it yourself.

Being an "agent"

You say you still can't play anything? No problem.

For you confirmed non-musicians who still want to try your hands at turning golden tones into gold, there are plenty of ways to go about it.

There's a joke around Nashville that says talented musicians can become rich entertainers, but untalented musicians can become super rich booking agents. How true is it? I don't know, as no one ever asked me to become an agent. But I do know booking agents can rack up impressive income figures, even on the small scale, with just a phone and a notebook for tools. An El Paso bicycle shop owner I know keeps four area nightclubs supplied with bands. Each account pays him around \$150 a week, commission paid by the bands, and bands practically stand in line for his attention.

Familiarity in working with legally binding contracts will make sure you get paid (standard contract forms are available online), and you'll also need some knowledge of what the various types of jobs should pay your groups (information also available online) to figure your commission. The standard rate for decades has been 10 to 15 percent though some agents somehow get away with charging as high as 25 percent. But once you establish yourself as a booking agent in your home region you should begin to get plenty of inquiries from both entertainment buyers and sellers, especially around three-day weekends and holiday times.

All the kinds of buyers mentioned in the musicians' section above will seek out agents if they can't locate quality groups for themselves, but it never hurts to go looking for them first. Getting listed in the "Entertainment Bureaus" section of the yellow pages is one of the best ways to get your name out, but placing a relatively inexpensive ad in the

Online music equipment suppliers

Musician's Friend

www.musiciansfriend.com

This one is my favorite. The prices are good, especially the sale prices, and the varied selection is outstanding. Be sure to get on the catalog mailing list.

Mars Music

www.marsmusic.com

Much of the same merchandise as Musician's Friend, but they tend to be a few dollars higher overall. They also have a catalog.

Sam Ash Music

www.samash.com

Though Sam Ash features many of the same brands as any other major supplier, they do have an outstanding selection of less expensive store-brand merchandise. Again, get the printed catalog.

Music Yo

www.musicyo.com

Though it has probably the best prices of any listed here, Music Yo doesn't have near the selection of the others. Also, the Music Yo catalog is only available online (but they will send regular updates if you get on their mailing list).

weekly classifieds circulars for your area is also a good idea.

Most special events coordinators like to finalize entertainment arrangements months in advance, so don't start expecting corporate Christmas party bookings to come rolling in around Thanksgiving. Get on the phone and do your selling early, and they'll keep coming back.

Now, how do you know the bands are any good? You don't, without hearing them live. Though most established agents require taped auditions, this has always been a bad idea—and I don't understand why they hang onto it. Anyone can bring in a tape of anyone else and pass it

off as themselves. It happens more often than not in fact. But going to see for yourself removes all doubt as to a band's quality. Only after you've seen the group in action do you need to ask for a tape to pass out to prospective buyers.

Keep exacting records, get your name out, tend to business, and before very long you should be able lay back and concentrate on your homestead between incoming calls for the services of your bands.

Other ways for non-players to get in on the action is by promoting local concerts (renting a venue, hiring entertainment, advertising, selling tickets and concessions, so on); offering transportation for band equipment; working as a "roadie," or stage-hand; renting out a flatbed trailer as an outdoor stage; maintaining band websites; restocking area retailers with CDs; sewing special stage costumes or decorations; providing band photography; in short, offering locally just about every music support service listed in the L.A. or Nashville phone books.

Again, as most self-reliant people tend to live in sparsely settled areas, none of the ideas presented here will provide the kind of independent wealth a few lucky individuals see in the show-biz big leagues. These are intended strictly as a starting point in developing your own ideas toward making a few, or a few hundred, extra dollars a month. But, like any other money-making plan, they require regular maintenance and attention to detail to keep them paying over the long term.

Now, drag out that old guitar, tune it up, and go out and make a buck. You can probably use the break. Δ

**Visit the
BHM
website at
www.backwoodshome.com**

Mane and tail tools

By Gary D. Kirchmeier

All too often horse owners make the mistake of feeling they have to cut off a nice mane because it gets too tangled. Frustration causes hasty action. That is too bad because it takes a long time to grow a mane or tail. Tangles can be a headache, especially on long manes such as many Arabian horses tend to have. Combs are prone to break hair and hang up. A superior tool for manes and tails is an inexpensive human hairbrush. They break very little hair and don't catch like a comb. Use the type with natural bristles and avoid the kind that have single stiff plastic teeth with little balls on the ends.

The second tool worth considering is a can of WD-40. This product comes in an aerosol can and is great for squeaky hinges. Few people would agree to put a common lubricant on their horse, thinking it would leave a terrible residue. I, for one, insisted on being shown on someone else's horse. It is quite surprising to find that there is no detectable residue and the tangles slip right apart. The spray emulsifies any oil and lubricates the hair. It leaves it feeling clean and dry. A lot of people are already putting it on their horse inadvertently, by using it as a blade wash for their clippers.

It also becomes an inexpensive aid for teaching horses that are leery of aerosol sprays. Spray-on medications can be expensive training aids. When the time comes to spray on medications, your horse needs to be accustomed to it already.

Should your horse be nervous about the spray can, try this procedure. Stand at your horse's left (near) shoulder and tip his nose toward you slightly with the lead rope. Touch him on the shoulder with the can and hold it there if you can. If he tries to move away he can only do so with his hindquarters pivoting around his forequarters. If he is not able to avoid the can touching his shoulder he will soon understand it isn't going to hurt him. It is a strange phenomenon that a horse will ordinarily accept frightening things quickly if you are able to hold it against him for a few seconds and if they cause him no pain. When he is able to move away and avoid the touch, that behavior is reinforced. Try not to let that happen. Move with him and stay in contact.

Gentle persistence is the key here. No one is encouraged to proceed beyond their individual skill levels if a horse violently resists.

To untangle the tail, start at the tip and work towards the base. The same is true for the mane. Spray on a little WD-40 when tangles are encountered and brush. A little experimentation will reveal the right amount of lubricant to use. Frequent grooming should alleviate most severe tangles if your horse is isolated from other horses. Horses kept in groups are inclined to groom each other, causing chewed or knotted manes and tails. Keep the WD-40 handy and you can fix all those tangles, lubricate the clippers, or silence a squeaky hinge. Δ

Mountain and winter driving

By Don Fallick

Every year, many people die needlessly while driving in the mountains. It's a shame; a little bit of forethought could prevent most of these tragedies. Mountain driving is different. It's always colder in the mountains than it is down on the flatland. Fall and winter come early at higher elevations, spring comes late, and summers are short and cool. In many parts of the mountains the snow never leaves, while others are subject to snowstorms, even blizzards that would be unseasonable anywhere else. So it's important to always be prepared for an emergency when driving in the mountains.

Light snow flurries, with an inch or less of snow on the ground, call for driving techniques very similar to rainy weather. Turn your lights on, slow down, allow extra room for stopping, and be very courteous to other drivers. Serious snow is deeper, thicker, icier, or wind-driven and drifting. If cars are sliding around on the road, or sliding off it, it's time to chicken out and find a motel. If you have never driven in serious snow or ice, get someone with experience to teach you. Learning by yourself is often learning the hard way, and it's never fun.

Of course, you may not have much choice. If you get caught unexpected-

ly in serious snow conditions, you may just have to cope with them anyway. There are four main dangers in snow driving. You may lose control, you may get stuck, your vision is certain to be restricted, and the other drivers on the road share these problems.

Maintaining control

Losing control poses the biggest immediate danger. You can slide into other cars, into ditches, even off cliffs. Driving too fast for conditions and inadequate traction are the main culprits. If you have a pickup truck, make sure there is enough weight in

ing in second gear to reduce torque, and stay in as high a gear as you can. With an automatic, stay in Drive. If you do start to spin out, immediately remove your foot from the accelerator pedal and steer the car in the "direction of the skid." You may find that your car is going the way you want it to, but not pointing exactly the way it's going. Don't worry about it. It's much more important for the car to be under your control than to look like it. More on skids later.

Busting drifts

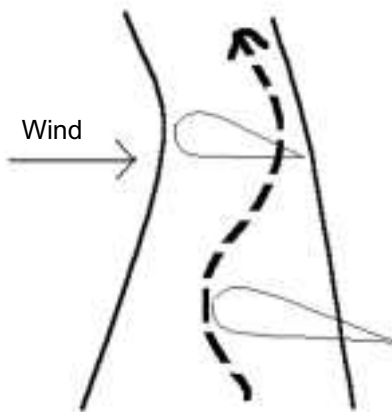
Leave lots and lots of stopping room between you and any cars ahead, even if you have to just creep along. The one exception to such slow speeds is when the snow is drifting across the road. If you go slow, the drifts will stop you, and you will not be able to get out. You would then face a serious winter survival situation. The way to beat drifting snow is to keep up enough speed to bust through the drifts. There's an art to it. The drifts

will be thinner on the downwind end than on the upwind end, so it's usually a good idea to try to bust through the downwind end. But be aware that the snow will tend to "suck" the car in toward the center of the drift. If the drift angles across the road at a sharp angle, with the downwind end closest to you, it may be safer to try to bust the upwind end, where you will be



If you start to spin out, immediately remove your foot from the accelerator and steer the car in the "direction of the skid."

the bed to hold the rear wheels down. A load of firewood is about right. Don't try to brake on slippery surfaces. Unless you are going perfectly straight, you are sure to swap ends. Even if you are going perfectly straight, hitting the brakes on snow or ice can cause you to spin out. So can applying the accelerator pedal abruptly, or shifting to too low a gear. If you have a manual transmission, try start-



Busting snowdrifts in normal conditions: Avoid the upwind (deep) ends of the snowdrifts.

past most of the drift by the time you hit snow. Even drifts that appear small and flat can be nearly a foot deep and 10 or 15 feet across. You have to hit them quite hard to carry you all the way through the drift. Speeds of 45 to 50 miles per hour may be required. You are taking quite a risk, because speeds like that are enough to get you very thoroughly stuck if you fail to bust a drift, or if one sucks you off the road. Do not even attempt to bust snow drifts without snow tires or chains.

Snow tires are more than just "all season radials." They are made with big, deep treads that look much like off-road tires, but they are made of special rubber that remains flexible at cold temperatures. They may not help much on ice. One of Mother Nature's meanest tricks is "black ice." It is completely invisible, and does not look icy, but is slipperier than calf snot. Most people cannot even stand up on black ice. Even snow tires will not help. If you hit black ice at even one or two mph you will not be able to stop. Studded tires, siped tires, or walnut-shell recaps may give you some purchase on black ice. But they may not help much on serious, deep snow. Only four-wheel drive, chains, or both are likely to help in real deep snow.

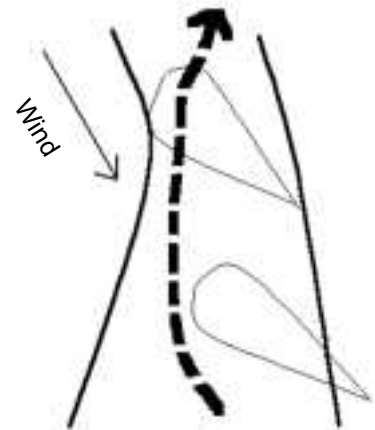
Chains

Not all cars are fit for snow tires or "serious" chains. The auto parts dealer who sells chains will tell you what sort are appropriate for your car. Carry a set of the proper size and type of chains whenever you travel in snow country. After the snow storm hits it's too late to buy them. You may not be able to drive to the store, and if you can get there, they will likely be sold out. There are three basic types of chains. So-called "cable-chains" are light weight, light duty devices suitable only for city driving. They don't work well, or last long, but they are the only kind of chains that will fit on most un-modified passenger cars without beating the wheel wells to pieces. They won't get you out of really deep snow, but may help keep you from getting stuck in snow up to two inches deep.

Regular chains, with cross-chains of real chain and elastic side-chain tighteners, are made for trucks, vans, and other vehicles with higher clearance around the wheels. They are heavy, take up lots of room, and are difficult to put on. They cost about twice as much as cable chains, but can handle deep snow up to six inches, depending on the size of the chain links. They generally last for years of seasonal use.

Whichever kind you have, you will want a pair of Channel-lok pliers to put them on with, a piece of cardboard or a tarp to lie on in the snow while putting them on, and some light-gauge wire for temporary repairs. If your chains require elastic side-chain tighteners, keep a spare or two, with hooks. Elastic tighteners are always breaking, and hooks are always getting lost. You will probably need to work bare-handed in putting on and taking off chains, so keep a pair of warm gloves or mittens for warming up afterward.

All chains go on the same way. Lay them out neatly behind the drive



If drifts are angling toward you, it may be best to hit the deep end to avoid getting "sucked into" the entire drift

wheel tires (rear-wheel drive) or in front of front-wheel drive tires and drive onto them. Grab the rear ends of the chain and bring them over the top of the tire, until you can hook the inside chain. Then work the chains around until they will allow you to hook the outside chain. Try to get the inside and outside chains equally tight. Then do the other wheel. If you have cable chains, you will not have elastic tighteners to worry about, but if you have regular chains, put the tighteners on, hooking as many hooks into the outside side-chain as necessary to pull it tight. Drive a half a mile or so and re-tighten, regardless of which kind you have. Thereafter, check tightness every five or ten miles. If you end up with loose chain ends banging against the wheel well, tie them down with the light-gauge wire so they can't flop around.

Remove chains as soon as you are not driving on snow any more. Driving on hard pavement is a sure-fire way to stretch, or even ruin, any kind of chains. Let them dry, and store them where they can be reached easily. You will probably need to remove and replace them several times in one trip. Don't worry if you have a hard time putting them on or taking them off. It doesn't get much

easier with practice, either. Nobody likes chains.

Stuck in the snow

If you drive in snow very much, sooner or later you will get stuck. If you are on a major highway, you can call a tow truck and pay the driver \$50 to pull you out. If the storm struck suddenly, you may have to wait a long time. While you are waiting, see if you can dig yourself out. Any time you drive in snow country, you should have a shovel in your trunk. A snow shovel works best, but any kind will do. A short-handled, flat-nosed garden shovel fits easily in the trunk without taking up much room, and works equally well in snow, sand, or mud.

Clear snow away from each of the tires, and shovel paths for the tires to the nearest clear pavement. Usually, this will be behind the car, but not always. There will probably be hard-packed snow under the car too. It will hold the drive wheels off the pavement, so you have to remove it too. A relatively narrow shovel like the garden shovel mentioned above works well for excavating under the car. People who live in the country often carry a regular snow shovel as well as a very narrow post-hole shovel, for under-car excavation.

The road may be icy beneath the snow. If it is, sprinkle some traction sand (sold in ten-pound bags at grocery stores in snow country) on the pavement. Kitty litter works even better, and costs less, and it won't add much weight to your trunk. Then try to drive out of the snow. If you can't, see if someone with four-wheel drive can pull you out. It's helpful to have a tow chain, tow strap, or at least a stout rope in the trunk for this purpose. Start the car and try to drive it out while the other driver pulls. It's polite to offer a tip, but they will probably refuse it. Have your exhaust system tested as soon as possible. You may have knocked something loose,

allowing carbon monoxide gas into the car. It is colorless, odorless, and deadly.

Winter emergency

If you are in a real blizzard, you may not be able to get out, or even get any help at all. Getting stuck in the snow can be an adventure, a nuisance, or a life-threatening catastrophe, depending on your state of preparedness and how long you are stuck. If you are beyond quick help, you have only two options: abandon your car or prepare to spend the night. **Do not** abandon the car unless you are certain that you can reach shelter right away. If a four-wheeler or snowmobiler comes to your rescue, that would qualify. So would walking to a nearby house that you can see clearly through the snow, if you know the path is clear. The rule in a blizzard is, "If you can't see it, don't go looking." Drifting snow can change the landscape in less than five minutes, making it totally unrecognizable and getting you hopelessly lost. People die every year this way.

Stay with your car.

If you wait out a blizzard in your car, dig out the snow around your tailpipe before you settle in. You may need to run the engine to keep warm part of the time, and the engine won't run if the tailpipe is plugged with snow. Try to find some way to protect it from blowing or drifting snow. Also, clear snow from at least one of the car doors, so you can get out. If you have warm clothes and blankets in the car, it's best not to run the engine for heat at all. You could have knocked part of the exhaust system loose when you got stuck. Running the engine could fill the car with deadly carbon monoxide. You'd never even know it. If there is more than one person in the car, huddle together for warmth. One "space blanket" can keep two people warm enough to survive this way. If you absolutely must run the engine for heat, run it just

What to carry

Inside the car:

- Snow brush/scrapper
- Space blankets
- Fresh water
- Container for melting snow
- Hard candy
- Warm gloves or mittens
- Cell phone
- Flashlight

In the trunk:

- Snow shovel & narrow shovel
- Jumper cables
- Tow chain or rope
- Kitty litter or traction sand
- Chains, tighteners, hooks, wire
- Channel-lok pliers
- Tarp or cardboard

long enough to warm up the car, then shut it off. There won't be enough gas to run it all night anyway. You might as well conserve gas and minimize the carbon monoxide danger too. Don't play the radio more than a few minutes when the engine is not running. You want to be able to start the motor after the blizzard quits.

Melt snow to drink by putting it in a cup or other container inside the car. Eating snow will make you thirstier in the long run, as you lose precious body heat. You'll do much better if you have some hard candy or other source of energy on hand. Beef jerky is not good for winter survival. It makes you thirsty. Even if you have plenty of water handy, you will have to pee a lot, losing body heat in the process. If you don't have food, plan to sleep a lot. Remember the Eskimos' saying, "Sleep is food."

The worst danger in winter survival is not snow, but wind. Snow is actually a pretty good insulator. Stay inside the car and out of the wind as much as possible. Nevertheless, you do not want to get buried. Check every two

or three hours to make sure you are not completely covered. Let someone know where you are. If you have a cell phone, call 911. If you do get buried, at least they will know where to look.

Vision and visibility

Even if you don't get stuck in the snow, it can restrict your vision by piling up on your windshield, windows, and lights. Keep a combination snow brush/ice scraper in the car. If you get caught without one, any broom will do for brushing snow. A credit card often makes an acceptable emergency ice scraper. If the ice is thick or hard, it may ruin the credit card, so use an old one. Never use metal for scraping glass.

Be sure to clear snow from your headlights and tail lights, too. When it's snowing, drive with the headlights on in the daytime, so other drivers can see you better. Stop every so often to clear snow from the headlights. The heat of the bulbs usually is not enough to keep them clear.

A blizzard not only reduces your vision, it also tends to make you invisible to other drivers. So does fog. If either is thick enough, other drivers may be stopped right in the travel lane of the road. Do not over-drive your lights. Go slow enough that you can come to a complete stop in the distance that you can see. Don't use your high beams. The light will reflect back into your own eyes and blind you. "White-out" conditions, whether caused by blowing snow or fog, are extremely hazardous. If you cannot see the road or tell where its edges are, there is no way you can steer straight. Stop immediately on the road and wait for conditions to clear enough to drive off the road to park. Stay well off the road until conditions clear enough to drive. There are always idiots who go 50 mph in fog so thick they can't see their own hood ornaments. Don't get in their way.

Overheating

Air is denser at lower elevations and less dense at higher ones. Any time that you change elevation in either direction by 3000 feet or more, the air setting on your carburetor will be wrong. Your engine will not produce as much power as it used to, and may even run rough. If you are just passing through, it's probably not worthwhile adjusting the carburetor. But if you will be staying at a higher or lower elevation than normal for several days or longer, and you notice a change in your engine's performance or gas mileage, a simple, inexpensive carburetor adjustment will probably fix the problem. Any mechanic can make the adjustment in about 10 minutes, and there are no parts to buy, so charges should be minimal. You will need to have the carburetor readjusted when you get home.

Sometimes when driving up steep slopes, the engine can heat up high enough to vaporize the fuel in nearby fuel lines. The coolant contains alcohols and similar chemicals to prevent freezing in low temperatures. These chemicals also have relatively low boiling points, especially at low air pressure. When the engine is laboring hard, as in climbing a steep hill, at high elevations where the air pressure is lower, the engine can get hot enough to boil part of the coolant solution. This condition is called "vapor lock," and is more common in carbureted engines than in fuel-injected engines. The engine will begin running very rough, then will quit altogether.

The solution is to allow the engine to cool off, so the vaporized fuel in the lines can re-condense. Some drivers try to hurry the process by pouring cold water on the fuel lines or packing snow around them. **Don't do it!** It is very easy to spill cold water on the hot engine block, causing it to crack, and ruining the engine. A small

crack may not make itself felt right away, but will allow engine coolant to contaminate the oil, destroying its lubricating ability and causing the internal engine parts to rust. A new engine costs several thousand dollars. It takes less than an hour for the engine to cool off by itself. Few people's time is that valuable.

If the vapor lock persists, **wait until the engine block is cool enough to rest your hand on**, then cool it further with cool water. The idea is to cool the vapor until it condenses. But remember, **NEVER pour water on a hot engine**. Be careful not to soak the spark plugs and other ignition parts, or the motor may not start. One highly-recommended trick to fix or prevent vapor lock is to clip ordinary, spring-type, wooden clothes pins to the hot fuel lines, to "draw the heat." I've never heard a satisfactory explanation of why this works, but it does.

Fuel-injected engines do not have carburetors to adjust. Nevertheless, they still need to be adjusted for altitude. And contrary to popular opinion, they are subject to vapor lock, though it is much less likely to occur in a fuel-injected engine. The solutions to these problems are the same as for carbureted engines—have the fuel/air mixture adjusted to compensate for major elevation changes, and let the engine cool off by itself.

Cooling help

The heater in your car is essentially just a second, small radiator. Hot coolant from the engine is forced through thin, flat tubes in a "heater core" while a fan blows air past them. The air thus heated is ducted into the passenger compartment of the car, and the coolant continues to the radiator, where it is further cooled before returning to the hot engine block. By opening the heat control to the "full hot" position and turning the fan to "high," you can assist your radiator's cooling ability by 20% or more. Overheating often happens in sum-

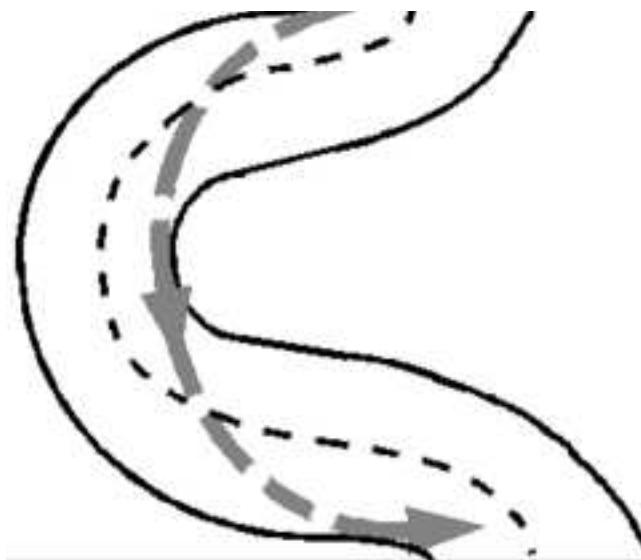
mer, when you don't really want extra heat. Nevertheless, do not run the air conditioner at the same time to cool off. Running the air conditioner places added strain on the engine, making it run hotter. The best strategy is to roll down the windows and run the heater as long as you can stand it, then stop the car and cool off.

Your engine is not the only part of your car that can overheat. If you are planning to pull a trailer over mountains, and you have an automatic transmission, it's a good idea to have an auxiliary transmission cooler installed as part of your towing package. The extra work of towing a heavy trailer up a steep hill makes the transmission heat up. Transmission fluid can get so hot that it bursts the seals. You lose all your fluid at once. The effect on your transmission is very much like what would happen in your engine if you lost all your oil at once. Melt down. But you have engine temperature and oil pressure gauges and warning lights to warn you of imminent engine problems. There is no instrumentation in your transmission. Prevention or risk are your only options. An auxiliary ATF cooler works and looks like a small radiator. It costs about \$100, and can prevent thousands of dollars of damage to your automatic transmission. Any transmission shop can install one.

Driving techniques

There are techniques to mountain driving that cannot be taught in a book. Watching someone use them to safely negotiate the curves and switchbacks of a mountain pass at high speed can give you the idea that they are driving like maniacs. They are not. Locals buy special, high-altitude equipment and engines so they

can drive in these conditions without trouble. They know the roads intimately, they know just how far they can see around each curve, and they know where to look to scan the road ahead. You do not know these things, so do not attempt to keep up with the natives. Of course, it's also dangerous to go twenty mph on a two-lane road where everyone else is going fifty. Here are a few mountain driving techniques that you can safely teach your-



To "straighten out a curve," Use both lanes when you can see them. Begin each curve as far to the outside of the curve as you can safely get. Aim to pass as close to the inside of the curve as possible just at the middle of the curve, and end at the outside again.

self. They won't allow you to drive like the natives, but they should keep you out of their way.

1. Gear down going downhill. It can save your brakes. The lower gear or drive range produces more torque, gives you better control in turns, and allows quicker stopping. It's safer to gear down at the top of a grade before your speed builds up dangerously.

2. On a winding road, slow down going into each turn, and use extra power to pull out of it. Smoothly adding power as you come out of the turn adds torque to the wheels, giving you better control. Done correctly, it

feels like the car is on rails, and you come out of the turn going faster than you went in. Avoid braking while turning. You can lose control and skid. Brake only when the front wheels are straight.

3. Use the entire width of the road, including both lanes **when you can see them**, to "straighten out" the curves. Begin each curve as far to the outside of the curve as you can safely get. Aim to pass as close to the inside of the curve as possible just at the middle of the curve, and end at the outside again, regardless of the lines separating the lanes of two-way traffic. You can do this legally where the center line is broken to allow passing. Just be sure there is no oncoming traffic.

Gradually add power after you pass the midpoint of the curve. Plan each curve so you begin and end in your own lane, going at a comfortable rate of speed. **Caution:** your heavily-loaded car, truck, or van is not a sports car.

Once you start through a downhill curve this way, you are committed, as it will be difficult to negotiate the curve at high speed without crossing the centerline. If you cannot see the entire curve plus enough of the road to know

that no traffic will get in your way, it's best to slow down before the curve and drive it normally. If you get caught partway through a curve and have to slow down to pull out of the way of oncoming traffic, back off on the accelerator and shift a manual transmission to a lower gear to slow down. Avoid braking if you can. If you must use the brakes, modify your line through the curve to allow a brief straight stretch for braking.

Be especially careful going downhill in curves. That's where you are most likely to skid. How you get out of a skid depends on which wheels

are skidding, whether you have ABS (Anti-Lock Brake System), and whether your car is front-wheel drive or rear-wheel drive. If you have anti-lock brakes, brake normally and steer the way you want the car to go.

Without ABS, it gets more complicated. Rear-wheel drive cars are better for getting out of skids because you have more options. The brakes work mostly on the front wheels, while the engine works on the rear ones. If the front wheels are skidding, gear down and back off on the accelerator. Stay off the brakes! The rear wheels will slow the car from the back, allowing the weight of the car to pull it straight. Steer in the direction the car is skidding until control is established, then apply brakes gently.

If you are not stopping fast enough, apply the parking brakes, which work only on the rear wheels. Hold the brake release "ON" all the time to keep the brakes from locking. If you have a lever type parking brake, with a button in the end for release, just hold the button in while using the lever as a hand brake. If you have a pedal-type parking brake, pull out on the brake release handle while pressing down the parking brake pedal with the left foot.

If the rear wheels are skidding, ease the pressure on the accelerator and steer in the direction the car is skidding. Stay off the brakes! Once the skid is corrected, gear down and apply the brakes gently.

If you have front-wheel drive, press down hard on the accelerator to increase steering effectiveness. Then apply the parking brake with the brake release held "ON" to slow down. Don't try to recover just by backing off the accelerator. That will only increase the skid.

Use common sense

Limited visibility caused by curves in the road and hills can also create problems. Be alert for signs warning of falling rocks and wildlife. Slow

way down in areas where deer occur. You will see them most frequently in the hours around dusk and dawn, but they may be present any time. Deer will usually run away from cars, but if they get scared, they may bolt right in front of you. Hitting a deer can damage your car as much as hitting a tree. Natives often purchase "deer repellants"—wind-powered, ultrasonic whistles that mount on the front bumper. You can't hear them, but the deer can. If you are going to be in the area, they're good to have. Buy them at sporting goods shops and local auto parts stores.

The lower oxygen content of the air at high altitude will make your engine burn gasoline less efficiently, producing less power. So you will get less gas mileage in the mountains. Gearing down for braking also burns more gas per mile. And, of course, pulling up steep hills makes the motor strain and use even more gas. Plan on more frequent fuel stops in the mountains. Your motor is not the only thing that needs more air at high altitude. You will tire more quickly too. If you smoke, the effect will be compounded. Change drivers very frequently. Your driving ability will deteriorate significantly *before* you feel tired. Ask the passengers to help watch for deer, fallen rocks, and snow slides.

Pay attention to avalanche warnings. Often, mountain roads will have signs prohibiting stopping between certain dates. That's avalanche season. Obey the signs; they mean it. If you must stop, to fix a flat tire or let an overheated engine cool, keep all passengers inside the car, buckled up, and quiet. Loud noises can start an avalanche, dumping an entire mountainside full of snow on the road in seconds and burying your car under yards and yards of hard-packed snow. It can carry you and your car off the road and down into the valley far below, pounding you with huge boulders and full-size trees along the way.

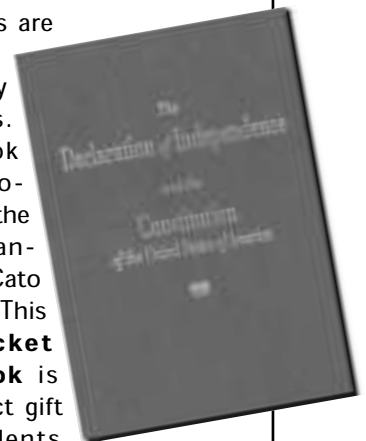
There is nothing funny or gentle about an avalanche.

Actually, the mountains are no more dangerous to drive through than big-city freeways, but the dangers may be unfamiliar and unexpected. If you carry the right equipment and don't try to drive in conditions beyond your experience and ability, mountain driving can be fun and relaxing. Δ

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Ask Jackie

“Retiring” in the backwoods, canning cabbage, green tomato pickles, grape jelly & grape juice, rolled oats, canned cheese, cleaning up cat puke, and storing eggs



Jackie Clay

Have you considered your options for maintaining your lifestyle into your “golden years”? Self-reliant and off-the-grid are great, but are they always doable or even practical as one gets older and less physically able to handle the associated workload? I like living in the country. However, I also like much of today’s modern medical technology and want to have it available to me if needed. For instance, I’m all for natural childbirth, but I want to be in a hospital where there’s access to ventilators and neo-natal equipment in case of an unplanned situation. I don’t know if I could feel comfortable knowing that emergency medical help was two hours away and only by helicopter (if the weather would allow).

**T “Jane”
jzee@2ki.net**

Yes, we have considered maintaining our lifestyle into old age. Both my husband, Bob, and I are 56, so that is natural. But it is not much of a decision for us, as neither of us could ever consider living anywhere but on a wild, unspoiled homestead. Simply living in the country would never work for us; it’s something in the soul, not simply a conscious decision. For us to be happy, this is a necessity.

For you, or many other readers, this is probably not the case. One does not have to live in the wilderness to strive for a self-reliant lifestyle. Each and every one of us is different, and thank God for that.

We feel that we would rather live a self-reliant lifestyle off grid, instead of opting for the “safety” of having medical care close by. Both of us have medical experience and supplies for sudden emergencies. But the bottom line is the quality of our life, verses living in total safety. Personally, I would rather live 20 more years (or two, or five), content and satisfied, than 30 years near facilities, and be unfulfilled and miserable.

Consider Helen and Scott Nearing, who were still homesteading when she was in her 80s, and he until he was 100. In fact, they built their last homestead in their “golden years” by hand.

We hope to be as active and will continue our lifestyle until death claims us. Of course, we will slow down. Everyone does. But we also learn easier and less strenuous ways of doing things as we go. As my dad says, “Too soon old, too late smart!” When I was 30, I canned 60 quarts of corn in one 24 hour day. Today, I can

16 pints a day, and can for a week, a little at a time.

We also learn what tools will accomplish the results we need with less work. Instead of hoeing two acres of garden, we’ve bought a Mantis tiller, which is like having a gasoline powered mad weasel weighing in at only 20 pounds. It lets us plant less garden by planting rows closer together, yet it quickly and effectively cultivates in a manner that is very easy on our bodies.

We used to do most of our wood cutting with a powerful but heavy Husqvarna chainsaw. It still is a good saw, but too hard on us over the hours. So we bought a new, much lighter, yet still powerful Stihl saw and can do the same work with much less strain on our backs.

I am quite sure that as we age, we’ll opt for more raised beds and intensive gardening to ease the “ups and downs” as well as the total size of our sustainable garden.

And, if it comes to it, we are willing to pay for “grunt work” should we become unable to do it, rather than give in and move to a more “convenient” locale. We feel very strongly that our home-raised food is the best for our bodies and we could never

switch to “storebought” food, simply for its lack of taste.

Another help for us is that we plan our next, imminent move as our last, and hope to have our “heavy” new homestead building chores done before we are much older. Maintaining the lifestyle is, of course, much easier than beginning anew. There is a house to build, barns, chicken coops, orchards, new soil to break and make fertile, weeds to tame, fences to build, etc., etc. And, as we build our homestead for *us*, we will, of course, keep an eye to the future. There will be no long, steep stairways. Much of the home’s living space will be on the ground floor. The outbuildings will be clustered, for ease of choring, especially in the winter. The barn aisles will be wide enough for a small tractor or team of horses and manure spreader to pass through daily. You get the picture.

Even today, our lifestyle does not require tremendous strength or energy. Bob is an agent-orange (Vietnam, again) diabetic, with heart disease because of it. I’ve got a bad back (horse wreck, long ago), and other assorted ouchies. We do our work in little bites. The key is to keep on until a job is done. In this way, we usually out-work most young homesteading couples. We just get out there and do it. By not pushing our bodies severely, but keeping very active every day, the work gets done, and we aren’t done in. When we need a break, we say so and simply take one, with no reproaches from the other, then get back at the task.

Right now, we don’t live a “primitive” life even off grid, seven miles from a blacktop road. We have running spring water, hot and cold in the house, a generator and battery bank for power for my word processor, the washing machine and television/vcr, power tools, etc. We waste no time (or energy) watching television, as there just isn’t anything we want to watch on it anymore. We have a flush

toilet and septic system. A decent forest road runs past our quarter-mile-long driveway, which is drivable year-round. We also have a large propane refrigerator, which is very economical, and better than most electric models. Life here is truly very easy.

Unfortunately, many people equate living off grid as pounding clothes on rocks in the creek, lugging water in buckets, using a smelly outhouse, and struggling to read by kerosene light. Put together correctly, off-grid living is nothing of the kind. We have friends living off the grid, who have satellite TV, a dishwasher, microwave, propane clothes dryer, electric freezer, and more.

We miss the adventure of beginning a remote off grid homestead. Living in such a spacious, finished home with everything in place, there is little adventure. I actually envy friends who are living in small cabins, lugging water, using an outhouse and reading by kerosene lights. Some of us are just built that way. After all, where would we be without the Lewis and Clarks?

I *never* expect everybody to be like me. (Boy would that be scary.) Each of us has his or her own decisions to make. We should live where we will be happy, whether it be in the city or in the remote central Alaskan wilderness. One thing I’ve learned, though, is that most of us can do much, much more than we ever thought possible, if we have the will and inclination to do it, whether we are 20 or 70.

Jackie

Do you have a recipe for canning cabbage, not sauerkraut?

Emmett Nelson
dewlds@msn.com

You bet, Emmett. I can a lot of it. While cabbage will keep a long time in the root cellar or even in a dark corner of a cool basement, there comes a time when it begins to soften and go bad. Before this happens, I

can it up and it stays good nearly indefinitely. Cabbage does get a little strong flavored in the jar when canned, but I offset this by dumping out the canning liquid at the time of use, and either boil the canned cabbage in fresh water or milk with a little butter, salt, and pepper. This takes care of things 100 percent.

Canned cabbage:

Choose tight, firm heads. Trim off any wilted leaves, cuts, or bad spots. You can either can your cabbage in chunks, such as quarters, or cut it up as you would for sauerkraut. I prefer the cut cabbage the best. Boil in salted water for five minutes, which wilts it a bit enabling you to pack more cabbage into each jar. Drain. Pack cabbage into jars to within one inch of the top of the jar. Add 1 teaspoon salt to each quart, or ½ teaspoon to each pint if desired. Fill jar to within 1 inch of top with boiling water. Wipe the rims clean. Place hot, previously boiled lid on each jar and screw down the rings firmly-tight. Process quarts 60 minutes and pints 50 minutes in a pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure, adjusting pounds of pressure for altitudes above 1,000 feet above sea level if necessary. See your canning book for more directions.

Jackie

Can you tell me a recipe for pickling sweet green tomatoes? How long does it take to process in the jars in a boiling water bath?

Rosa
BBRA82@aol.com

I sure can, Rosa. In the fall, there are always so many green tomatoes that are not needed to ripen indoors for sauces. I make green tomato pie (fake apple), dill green tomato relish, sweet tomato pickles, dilled half green tomatoes, and fake mincemeat with green tomatoes, to mention only a few. Here’s a simple sweet green tomato pickle.

Spiced green tomatoes:

6 lbs. small hard whole green tomatoes
1 pt. white vinegar
½ Tbsp. cloves
4 lbs. sugar
1 Tbsp. cinnamon
½ Tbsp. allspice

You may scald and peel the tomatoes or not. Make a syrup of the other ingredients and bring to a boil. Drop in the tomatoes and simmer until they take on a somewhat translucent appearance. Dip out onto a cookie sheet or shallow bowl and cool rapidly. Pack cold into jars. Strain syrup and heat to boil. Pour over tomatoes and seal jars. Process in hot water bath for 15 minutes, counting from the time the canner reaches a rolling boil. Be sure that the boiling water covers the jars by at least one inch. Makes about 4 pints.

You may alter the spices to suit you, but this recipe makes a quite sweet, spicy tomato pickle that is nice and crunchy.

Jackie

My mother used to make homemade grape jelly and grape juice. She recently passed away and I do not know where her recipes are for these items. I do know that she used Sure-Jell in her jelly and she used so many cups of sugar to so many cups of juice, cooking for so long. She also used to put wax on top of the jelly before putting on the lid.

Would appreciate it if you could supply me with any recipes or at least direct me to where I might obtain them. Your consideration will be appreciated.

Linda Linderman
Winter Haven, FL

My grandmothers and mother also used to make lots of homemade grape jelly and grape juice. We even used to have a large grape arbor (which you

seldom see any more which is too bad) in our side yard, from which baskets and baskets of succulent, sweet grapes were harvested every fall. Grape jelly and grape juice are very easy to make at home. You can get a box of Sure-Jell at the grocery and find a very good list of common jelly and jam recipes inside using the product of course. Here are the basics for both juice and jelly. I'm sure it will be just about what your mother made.

Grape juice:

Stem and wash ripe grapes. Cover them with water and heat slowly. Do not boil hard; only simmer. Cook slowly until grapes are very soft, then strain through a bag as you would for jelly. Do not press, or the juice will be cloudy instead of clear. To each quart of juice, add half a cup of sugar (or to taste). Mix well. Pour into clean jars to within half an inch of the top. Wipe rim of jar clean and place hot, previously boiled lid on jar and screw down ring firmly tight. Process jars for 15 minutes in a water bath canner, counting from the time that the canner comes to a full rolling boil. Be sure that the water covers the jars by at least one inch.

As well as using a jelling agent such as Sure-Jell, you can simply add juice and sugar and boil it until it reaches the jelling point which is when a teaspoon full of the hot jelly will slide off a spoon in a sheet, not drip off. Here's such a recipe.

Grape jelly:

Extract grape juice as above. Measure and bring to a boil in a very large kettle. For each cup of juice, add three quarters of a cup of sugar. Boil hard to jelly stage. Pour into jars, seal, and water bath for ten minutes.

As your mother did, I used to use the old method of pouring melted paraffin on top of the jelly or to coat the top of the jar and lid with it. As we used to use "odd" jars for jellies, we usually used the paraffin to seal

the jelly. This was okay, but really not so hot. Any movement would often crack the seal loose, resulting in leaking jelly or moldy jelly. The mold was completely harmless, but ugly. It can be spooned off, but no one feels like eating the jelly after seeing the mold. Also, mice would nibble through the wax and sample the jellies which was unhealthy and very unappetizing, especially when they left little rodent "presents" on top of the wax.

Today, I use standard pint and half pint jars with new lids. These are sealed in a water bath canner as above. No leaks. No mold. No mice. Much more economical as you don't lose processed food. And because our home canned jams and jellies are so good, who wants to lose even one jar?

Jackie

I want to grow oats to produce my own rolled oats. I plan on using hull-less oats. How do I process the oats to make the rolled oats?

Mary Crabtree
Springfield, OH

It is very easy to make rolled oats from your own home raised oats. Before the new hull-free oats, it was nearly impossible. But now it's easy. All you need is a rolled oat mill. They are not expensive and will last a lifetime and more. They are like a hand grain mill only they squash the oats flat, instead of grinding them into flour. Lehman's carries them or you can pick one up from most any company selling grain mills. Not only is it easy to roll your own oats, but it's fun. Even the neighbors beg to be allowed to "squash oats."

Jackie

I read with great interest how you can cheese and how someone tried butter. My question is how do you get the cheese out of the jar? Does it stay soft, like a spread? Can you take a slice off for a sandwich? Maybe I

missed something, but I can't visualize how once melted in the jar, you can get it back out, except maybe in small pieces, dug out with a knife.

Rick Murphy
Boise, ID

Good question Rick. But you haven't stumped me yet. I can my cheese in wide mouth pints and half pints. To release the cheese, I simply heat the jar in a pan of water up to the cheese level until the outside barely melts. Sort of how you release Jello from a mold. Then quickly slip a thin knife in alongside the cheese to release the vacuum and dump it out on a plate. Stick it in the cold for a few minutes and you again have firm, cold cheese.

Slice or grate as you wish. I put leftovers in a plastic baggie in the fridge. This cheese isn't quite as good as fresh cheese, but it is better than store cheese, and the canned cheese is a good way to save homestead crafted cheeses over time.

Jackie

There MUST be an easier way to clean up pet messes than using a paper towel. Last night my cat got sick and threw up in the hall, which I discovered by stepping in it barefoot. Paper towels soak through and you get your fingers in the disgusting mess. And me, with a delicate stomach. Any ideas?

John Silveira
Brookings, OR

I gave up paper towels years ago. Instead, I cut a stiff paper plate in half and scoop up an accident with that. It gets nearly all of it. The rest, you can mop up with a dampened rag. No more fingers in the mess. This also works great for broken jars of jam, tomato sauce, catsup, relish, kiddie (and adult) messes of all kinds. In fact, I keep a stack of paper plates mostly for just this use.

Jackie

How can I store fresh eggs when egg production is down and have fresh eggs during the holiday baking time?

Also, my husband has a tobacco habit. Where can I find seeds and what kind is best? He likes to dip snuff. I remember reading an article out of BHM about this, but after reading the article, I read another article that said the flowering tobacco seeds are harmful to use. Do you know what is true? I would like to know if they are safe to use.

Lois Hutson
Jacksonville, TX

First of all, you can encourage your hens to lay longer in the season by keeping extra light in the coop. Sometimes this is only adding a west facing window. Other methods include keeping a light in the coop. I know people living off grid who bought solar walk lights and place them in the south and west windows of the chicken coop to charge, then they come on at dark, keeping the hens active and laying all evening. If you have electricity, keep a 40-watt light bulb burning in the coop using a cheap timer for four hours after sundown, and you'll find your hens lay more eggs and lay them longer in the year. Also, keeping your coop windproof and warm will encourage laying.

When your "girls" begin to slow down, gather all the fresh clean eggs to store. Eggs are protected, naturally, by a thin external membrane. Therefore, when you wash or scrub the eggs, the membrane is washed off and the eggs will store for shorter periods of time. Store only naturally clean eggs. By storing them in a cardboard egg carton in the refrigerator, you can keep them quite a long time.

When we lived way remote and snowmobiled in and out seven months out of the year, we gathered up eggs in November which was as late as the girls produced. Storing

them as above, the eggs generally lasted nearly until spring production kicked in. Of course, the older eggs should be broken first into a cup, as once in a while, you'll get a bad one. You can tell these by the runny yolk, watery white and ugly look.

You can keep eggs in waterglass, which is a solution of sodium silicate and water. The sodium silicate clogs up the pores of the egg and helps keep them for longer periods of time. Likewise, rubbing fresh, clean eggs with lard or shortening will help keep them longer. As keeping eggs is not much of a problem by using the above methods, I do not bother with these ways, as they are messy and there is not much nastier feeling than reaching into a crock of waterglass solution for an egg or two.

Now, to the tobacco. All tobacco is poisonous. Period. It contains nicotine, which is so toxic that you can kill chicken lice and mites by shredding up some tobacco and putting it into the nest boxes. But smokers don't want to hear that.

You can raise your own tobacco by buying smoking/chewing tobacco seeds for such a variety as burley, from a number of seed houses, such as Henry Field's. Their website is mySEASONS.com or write to them at 415 North Burnett, Shenandoah, IA 51602-0001.

This tobacco is not the same as flowering tobacco, although it does have flowers. Flowering tobacco is not used to smoke or chew. There are Native American tobaccos which are basically wild tobaccos available, but these tobaccos are more toxic and should not be used for everyday smoking. Indians used tobacco mainly for ceremonial use.

Jackie

Want more Clay?

Go to:

www.backwoodshome.com

Letters

(Dear Readers - Thank you for writing to Backwoods Home Magazine. The opinions and suggestions we receive from our readers are very important to us. We regret that we are no longer able to print or individually respond to every letter received due to the volume. We do read every letter received, and pass them along to the editor or writer concerned. We print a selection from our mail that best represents the views and concerns of our readers.

— The Editors)

Dreaming

Please re-up my subscription for 2 years. I love your pro freedom stance. I am currently living near St. Cloud, Minnesota and am dreaming and planning for my own home in the woods. I have 10 acres in northwestern Wisconsin and on it is a small cabin that I lived in for only 8 months. The 77 mile commute got old. No running water, no electric, no phone, wood for heat, no problem. I guess I wouldn't mind some solar cells and some creative plumbing. It seems that a lot of our current society is over focused on materialism, and not so much on spiritual living and positive relations with others. I find cigarette smoke awful and for myself I don't drink. With that and having a desire to live "out there" it is difficult to find a good partner (read attractive female). I am 47 now and work-out regularly, and am in incredible shape. I suppose for now I'll keep working down bills and dreaming and working on the land and some day I'll make the move. Thanks for a great mag.

David Tyler
Sauk Rapids, MN

Just a short note to thank you very much for just being there with us.

We are in the throes of excitement as we look forward to our move to our new place in MO.

We thank you also for the anthologies that are available. Everything all wrapped up neat.

Continue the fantastic work of supplying quality, useful, and intelligent articles.

Tess Graves
Palm Beach Gardens, FL

Glock

Mr. Ayooob's 4-page advertisement for the Glock pistol leaves out one important point. I have handled Glocks at gunshows, and found that they are unsuitable for left-handed use. Ten percent of the population is left-handed, and there are occasions when a right-handed shooter may have to fire with the left hand.

There are very few autopistols suitable for left-handed use and almost none of significant caliber have a grip comfortable for smaller hands. Fortunately, I can use my right hand pretty well, so if I felt the need to carry an autopistol, I could get by. Till then, I'll stick with revolvers.

Denton Warn
Hutchinson, KS

Making the move

As you can see by the change of address, we have departed Florida for the Northern Panhandle of Idaho. We bought our 40 acre piece of the dream in 1998 and have been "visiting our trees" twice a year since. Now, we have both retired and are here in Bonners Ferry to stay.

For this first winter, we will live in the outbuilding which is 60' x 42'. 800 SF will be our living quarter and later a shop for my husband. Construction on the main house will begin next spring. Our location is actually 30 miles north of Bonners Ferry, almost to the Canadian border (3 miles). Because we are so isolated, we will be off the grid and make our own power. Mike is an electrical engineer, so this is the least of our challenges.

I just want you to know that Backwoods Home has been a major asset to planning our life here in Idaho. It has always been our habit to save specific articles from subscriptions & file them in a 3-ring binder. With Backwoods Home, we have saved every complete issue! From power to food and water, every issue has had something for us to use. Thank you to all of your staff and contributors. Your help has made our dream of independent living so much easier.

Robin Young
Bonners Ferry, ID

Prisoner policy

I want to thank you graciously for the letter from you stating your policy for inmates. It was so nice and refreshing to hear from some one who is honest and caring in his relation with incarcerated people.

I am in a federal prison and the policies in regard to published articles and magazines sometimes change day to day.

Under these circumstances, with money being a scarce commodity, I will take your warning and delay my subscription until my release. Again thanking you for your honesty and integrity. Rest assured that when I am released (and God willing) am able to pursue my goal of self-subsistence, I will again be in contact regarding a subscription and hopefully help.

James B. Squires
Jesup, GA

Canning butter

First off I just want to say I have been reading Backwoods Home Magazine for a number of years and when you sent me issues to fill out my ASG subscription I was pleased. I finally decided to subscribe and take advantage of receiving the first anthology...I am very glad I did.

I would like to address this letter to Jackie Clay, in her response to the lady that asked about canning butter,

she told her that she bet this lady did have a way to do this even though she said all she had was a canner. Jackie, you missed the obvious, her canner can be used as a cold packer. Just don't seal the lid. It also has a rack to keep the jars off of the bottom. To me that is the most obvious choice.

As for canning butter, here is the recipe I use. I use unsalted butter.

Heat canning jars (jelly jars) in the oven at 250 degrees for 20 minutes, jars only, not rings or lids. Put lids and rings in boiling water for about 10 minutes and then shut off so they are sterilized. While jars are heating in the oven, melt butter in saucepan until it comes to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cover. Simmer 5 minutes. Pour melted butter into hot jars, wipe rims, add lids and rings, and tighten. They will seal as they cool. No need to process. After they are cool, place in refrigerator overnight to harden. Once hard, remove and store. I think cool and dark is best. They should keep for at least 3 years. To keep the contents from separating, you can turn them over a couple of times as they cool to keep contents mixed.

That's it. I did not come up with this recipe myself. I got it a long time ago but cannot remember where.

Steve Brush,
smbrush@alltel.net

Education revolution

Just found your website and was very interested in perhaps subscribing to the magazine. But was curious about the political leanings figuring it must be the same as the others. What a pleasant surprise to read your article on education revolution. I have known these things for many years, yet when you try to convince folks on what is going on they can't see the forest for the trees, or else they have their head stuck in the sand. Keep up the good work. Now I have to go get my subscription.

Keith & Cindy Burton
Medford, ME

Applause

This is just a short note to thank you for giving us (ASG subscribers) the opportunity to receive your magazine. After resubscribing to ASG I discovered your magazine. I was disappointed that I hadn't learned about you soon enough to subscribe to yours instead. But after their failure, you came to the rescue and sent us your magazine.

Thank you so much for your magazine's content. I always read it cover to cover on the day it arrives. I'm only sorry I could not take advantage of your offer soon enough to receive the constitution and basic survival guide.

Your magazine is a gem and I am (temporarily) in your debt.

Nolan G. Gallo
Long Beach, CA

Thank you for rescuing me and others from losing a guide for planning for tomorrow and beyond. I was not going to renew my subscription to American Survival Guide because it had become too tame and sanitized. I enjoy your deep and outspoken editorials. Our forefathers were not ones to follow government leaders' dictates without question. I live by the motto "I love my country, and distrust and sometimes fear my government." We do not elect the inner government, CIA, FBI, NSA, etc. They are entrenched and do not answer to the people until scandal uncovers their dark world. Besides, large corporations and big money control expenditures for their benefit with the taxpayer carrying the load of paying for it.

I grew up on a farm and have always loved the country even while living in the city in southern California. Your articles allow me to reconnect with how people lived and survived before the present. I was prepared for the new millennium if the world had wobbled instead of smoothly spinning on. My wife and I

had made a retreat to fall back to for our own protection, but your magazine is helping us to better prepare for natural or man-made disasters that may befall us in the future. I had only subscribed to ASG and only on a year to year basis, however, I feel confident that your articles, fiery spirit, and leadership will continue to fulfill our future needs for information and patriotism. We love the feeling that people can enjoy life simply using merely their mind, imagination, healthy body, and spirit to live in a wholesome world and appreciate what mother earth has to offer if we care for it.

Thank you again for providing us with quality reading and thinking.

Clarence Stratton
Coloma, WI

I just received our set of the "Whole Shebang", and have started reading through it. The more I read, the more wonderful a magazine BHM appears. While we have a few of the individual issues picked up from various magazine stands, we never saw until now the consistent quality of your magazine. We are looking forward to our first issues from the subscription.

In the WS, there are CDs for 2000 and 2001. Will these years also become printed anthologies or will future collections solely reside on CD? I'm hoping they see print because I still find paper more useful and accessible than computer and you can always read a book even without electricity or other requirements.

Bob Slaughter
rslau@atl.mindspring.com

We plan to print the anthologies for 2000 and 2001 in the coming year.

—Dave

Want to put your two cents in?

Send letters to:
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The last word

A proposal for ending violent crime

It was an interview I caught just a part of back in the '70s. I can't remember who the interviewer was; it's not important. He was interviewing a diplomat from Saudi Arabia just after the price of oil went to dizzying heights and Western money began to pour into Arab coffers changing Arab economics. The interview went something like this:

The interviewer said, "Your country is trying to leap from a 13th century feudal society into the 20th century on this oil money..."

"Yes, we are," the Saudi conceded.

"...and yet you retain a lot of barbaric ways."

The Saudi looked perplexed. "What do you mean we have barbaric ways?" he asked.

"Well, if a man is caught stealing, you cut his hand off, don't you?"

The Saudi thought about this for a moment. "You consider cutting off a hand barbaric?" he asked.

The interviewer said, "Of course."

The Saudi said, "We don't cut the hand off for the first offense. A man has to commit two or three offenses before we do that. Each year we cut off six or seven hands, but we have almost no crime in our country. In your country, every year you throw people in jail for awhile, or worse, you put them on probation, and every year you turn hundreds of thousands of criminals out of prisons and back onto the streets, knowing full well that hundreds of thousands of these criminals are going to continue to murder, rape, rob, steal, and molest children. Do you think this is more civilized? We don't.

"In my country the guilty suffer the punishment and the stigma that goes with it. But men, women, and children can walk our streets in safety. Can you say that in America? The way you turn criminals back out into the general population is like loosing packs of wild dogs into the streets. We consider Americans the most barbaric people in the world."

The interviewer was embarrassed and quickly changed the subject, never again coming back to the question of "barbarism." And though those weren't the exact words exchanged, that was the gist of it, and 30 years later the Saudi's response is still on my mind.

There is no doubt that there is an ongoing crime problem in this country that all the prisons and all the social workers are incapable of fixing. But I think there is a solution. Here's my proposal: We change the Constitution, amending the prohibition against "cruel and unusual punishment" and we institute some exceptions.

The punishment? Those now regarded as either career criminals or criminals who are both violent and incorrigible, would have their right arms and left legs cut off—or left arms

and right legs, but the dominant arms go. And they're sent home right afterward. No prison, but also, no welfare and no state aid of any sort.

Think of the impact of such punishment. If Bubba raped two women, or he's a hit man for the Mob, or he got caught once too often robbing liquor stores, and he's tried and convicted, it's off to the hospital, *whack, whack*, and he goes home minus an arm and a leg. His life of crime is over. No long-term prison costs, and he becomes a walking—hobbling—billboard for how crime *really* doesn't pay.

Street gangsters who admire members who spent some time in the Big House aren't going to look up to or respect Bubba when he's a pathetic invalid sitting on his porch all summer with nothing to do except swat flies away with his one good arm. Kids aren't going to admire him, women aren't going to give him those sidelong glances they reserve for the tough and the powerful. Sexual predators aren't going to have to register anymore. We'll know who they are.

Again, it would only apply to violent crimes. Not drug crimes, not adultery, not speeding, but murder, armed robbery, burglary, rape, child molestation. For most crimes, the sentence would be carried out only after two or three offenses. For a few, like murder or child molestation, there would be exceptions; one offense and *whack, whack*.

The recidivism rate for violent crimes in this country now stands at about 60 percent in three years. This means that 60 percent of offenders who have been through the system will eventually be caught and convicted again—in three years or less. But before they're caught again, they'll have committed dozens and sometimes hundreds of crimes. And that's just the ones who get caught.

How many of the people we read about who have abducted, raped, and murdered little girls turn out to have been repeat offenders? How many women have been raped and how many store owners murdered by career criminals who already have a string of convictions behind them? What are these people doing on the streets?

Crime wouldn't completely disappear. There would still be the psychotics. But my prediction is that murder, robbery, burglary, and all other violent crimes would soon drop more than 95 percent. People would begin to feel safer in their homes. They'd feel they could walk the streets at night. Gun control advocates could take solace because the general population would feel less need for guns.

For those who would want to argue that it was still cruel and unusual? Don't worry, soon it would almost be unneeded, as cutting off the right hand is almost unneeded in Saudi Arabia, because there'd be almost no crime.

But who'd take care of them? I don't care. Their families can, charities can, churches can, but no public money.

And what if they still commit a violent crime after that? Well, they still have one arm and one leg left so, *whack, whack*, then send them home again. Let me see them commit a crime then. Δ

— John Silveira